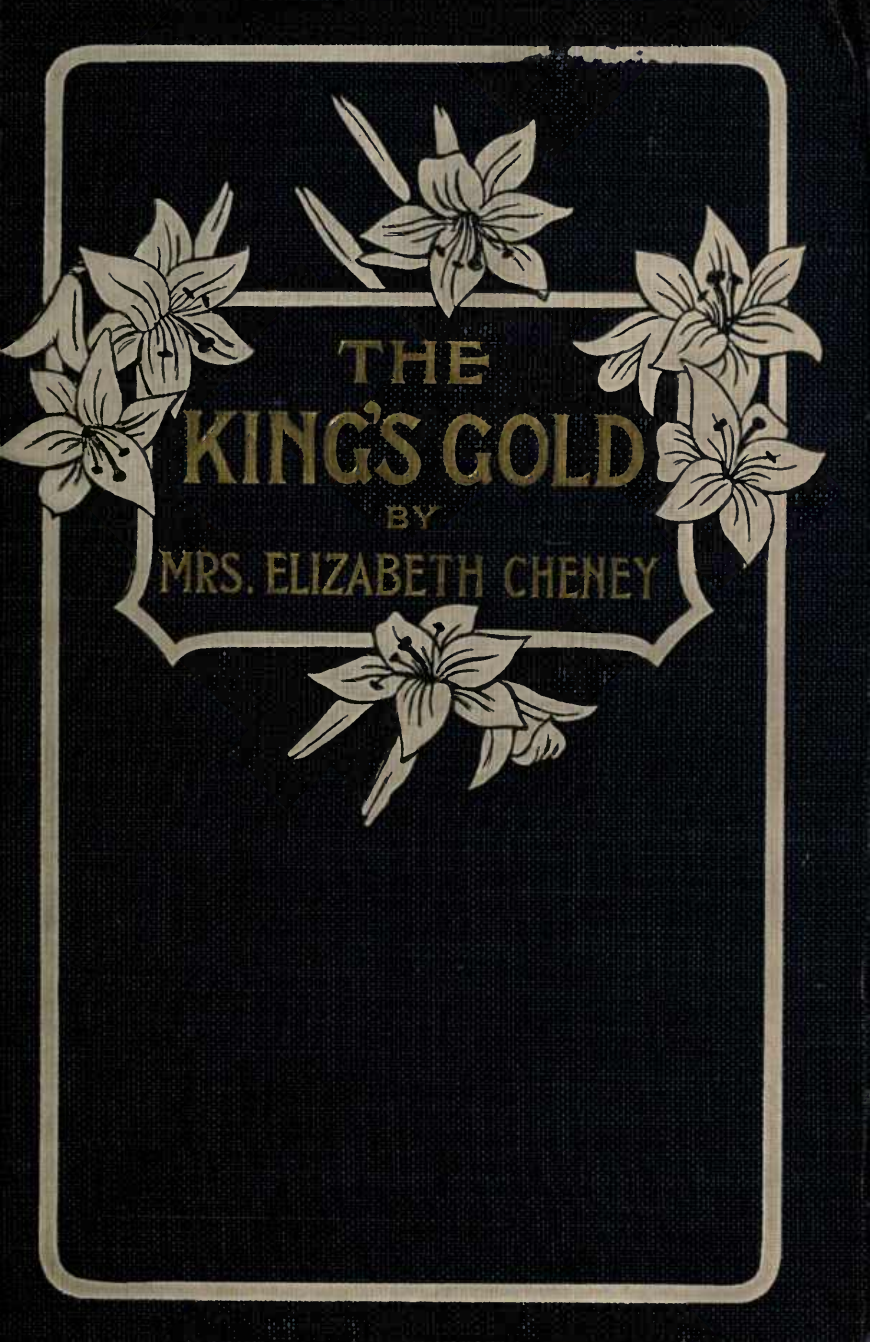

THE
KING'S GOLD
BY
MRS. ELIZABETH CHENEY

To my mother

From

Herman

Mt Clemens, Mich

Sept. 28. 1901

THE KING'S GOLD

A STORY

BY

MRS. ELIZABETH CHENEY



NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS
CINCINNATI: JENNINGS & PYE

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1900.

It is the King's—
this glinting, yellow stuff
For which men strain and delve; exile themselves
To cruel Arctic snows or blist'ring sands,
Torture their bodies, and destroy their souls.
Still it is not their own; if paltry wage
Of unskilled toil, or well-deserved meed
Of lauded prowess, or the ringing hoard
That Death the realist shakes from stiffening hands
Of one swift generation to the next,
It is the King's—
and every man that breathes
Is but His steward, righteous or unjust;
It is the touchstone of man's love for Him,
'Till, unexpected, He shall come again
From that far country and demand His own.

THE KING'S GOLD

CHAPTER I

To the soul that has not learned to find its all in God, happiness consists principally in a confident expectation of the morrow's joy. Realization is not the flood tide of bliss. It is more often the beginning of the ebb. There are days so full of hope that they shine out in memory's landscape like mountain peaks crowned with eternal sunlight; days when beauteous outward conditions and the rapture of the heart respond one to the other in a glorious antiphonal of delight. Such a day dawned for Helen West one radiant Sunday in June. It was not long after sunrise when she threw open the shutters of her bedroom window over the east porch of the old-fashioned brown house on Elm Street. A shower of dewdrops from the startled rose vines that wreathed the casement fell on her bright, upturned face. She reached up and pulled a large crimson rose, fastening it into

the belt of her fresh print gown. The vines made a charming frame for her girlish figure.

"O, beautiful world! she said softly, looking with shining eyes across the blossoming gardens to the distant hills. Her heart seemed well-nigh bursting with its store of gladness. Happiness had overtaken her in a tidal wave. Not one cherished desire, but several were about to bloom into rich color and fragrance. Life, like a splendid diamond, flashed its rainbow tints from many facets and dazzled her soul. She recognized that a deep current of spiritual peace underran her joy and intensified it. That very day she was to unite with the church to which her parents belonged. Although of a buoyant nature, she had inherited from Puritan and Scottish ancestors a serious cast of mind and a conscientiousness that had made her responsive to early instruction on her duty to God. Her father's Christianity was of a stern type. He moved in the atmosphere of the Decalogue. Although a plain man, a village storekeeper, with simple manners, there was something of majesty in his presence, the dignity of uncompromising godliness. His store, always

cleanly and orderly, was never a resort for the male gossips of the place, but the minister oftentimes found a hint for a sermon in a half hour's chat there. Nathaniel West was familiar with no one, and spoke rarely even to his wife and children. He was not glum with his reticence, but absorbed as one who pondered on the great things of God. Genuine, just, loyal, he was thoroughly respected by the villagers. The evildoer feared his piercing, keen gray eyes, and his deep, sonorous voice struck terror to the boy who was caught imposing on a small lad or tormenting a dumb animal.

Mrs. West is not a subject for a pen-and-ink sketch, but for the brush of a Raphael. If her husband represented the Law, she was the embodiment of St. John's epistles. Her face was as clear-cut and delicate as a priceless cameo, with a soft, heavenly light upon it, and yet withal a forcible face, firm as well as sweet. It was a face that should have shone out upon the traveler from the stained glass of a dim old cloister, and seemed out of place amid the homely walls of a New England kitchen. God sometimes gives his jewels strange settings.

Here was a gifted mind, a nature sensitive to select the precious gold of life from the alloy, a poetic soul shut in to struggle with petty economies, to toil over washtub and cooking stove, to learn how to do without the amenities and to abound in the discomforts and turn them into serenities.

Mary West was an orphan when Nathaniel married her. She could not remember her mother. She had a faint recollection of a room under a skylight, hung with a few unframed canvases, and littered with strange-looking garments, weapons, brushes, tubes of paint, all centered around a tall three-legged frame where a pale, thin man sat hour after hour painting trees and lakes and houses. Sometimes she had to stand for a long, long time with a dingy crimson scarf or a square of ragged lace over her head. These same bits of ancient finery did duty at other times as robes for a feather duster, her only doll. The man would often work all day without noticing her, but occasionally he would kiss her and smooth her hair. Again, he would burst into tears, and throwing aside his brush would pick up a violin and

make it talk of things she could not understand, but that somehow seemed to lighten her heart of a dull pain, as if one had said tenderly, "I know all about it, little one."

She was often hungry, and many times was left all alone for hours. Her father—for so she recalled him—always carried out a picture with him, and usually brought it back at night. No one ever came up to the skylighted room, except a harsh woman who lived in the basement. She always asked for money, and used to get very angry when there was none for her. One day she brought a loud-voiced, red-faced man with her, and they looked at all the pictures and other things in the room, and talked much with her father. The next morning he bade the child come, and took his violin in its shabby green case under one arm, and went out holding the hand of the little girl, who knew that her shoes and hat and dress were all rent and soiled. They walked on and on and on out of the crowded town to a country road, and she remembered that he said, "My God, has it come to this!" when they stopped in front of a large mansion, and he began to play. They walked

all day, and people gave them a few pennies and some cold food. It was dusk when they rapped at the door of a comfortable house in the village of Chester, and asked leave to lie on the hay in the barn that night. A gentle woman, who had come to the door and listened with pitying eyes to the father's story, gave them a warm supper. The man was allowed to go to the barn to sleep, but the child was given a small bed in the house. She did not leave the bed for many days, for fever came on, and as her mind wandered she did not ask for her father for a long time. One day, when she inquired for him, the kind woman who cared for her told her that he had gone to be with her mother. She did not know then that he had died that first night of their wanderings. He had always been associated in her memory with poverty, hunger, cold, and loneliness, but she had belonged to him, and when she found that she could see him no more she felt what a lost child suffers in the streets of a great city, with the underlying agony of the knowledge that there was no home for the seeking. The bark that towed the little boat on life's ocean may

have been itself but a derelict, but when the rope parted and the larger craft went down the waves seemed more powerful and merciless than before.

When Mary grew strong enough to be of use in the household her protector sent her to a friend, a milliner in a neighboring village, for whom the child learned to wash dishes, to run errands, and later to assist in waiting on customers. She had a few terms at the school-house on the green, where she made progress out of all proportion to the opportunity allowed her. When the milliner's widowed sister and four children came to share the slender income of the little shop Mary became the maid of all work, with her pay in board and clothes. Life became stern and monotonous. She felt thirsty for books, but she had little time to read. She was conscious of ability to learn to paint, to master a musical instrument. Once she took her father's old violin from its case, and tried to feel her way on the two unbroken strings, but they seemed to mock her with such horrible discords that she felt as if a demon barred her way, an opposition which was more tangibly

expressed in the person of the milliner's sister, who declared that the fiddle was Satan's own, and for her part she "wouldn't live under the same roof with the ungodly thing." The violin was sold for a song to the German gardener at Judge Wellford's, and Mary's only tears were shed out in the meadow, lying in the long grass and detaining a quail from its nest by her soft sobbing.

Mary loved the sound of the wind in the trees, the patter of rain on the roof, the rustle of autumn leaves. She longed to know flowers and birds. She was sent to Sunday school, but the teacher was a shallow young girl, who was not interested in the pupil with the Cecilian face and roughened hands, and was still less concerned about the lesson. The milliner had given the child a fine-print Testament, which the orphan read at every opportunity, but the Christ who charmed her lonely little soul was purely objective. She dreamed once that she was one of the children that he laid his hands upon in blessing, and awoke stretching her poor, thin little arms in the darkness, to find it was only a dream. One winter, while attending

revival services she responded readily to an invitation to give herself to God, and believed that he pardoned her sins through Jesus Christ, but she had yet to learn the day-by-day friendship of the Saviour, and she worshiped with a vague, remote sense of his interest in her life. She had observed some beautiful friendships, and it seemed to her that human love could satisfy her and make amends for the hard denials of life.

Nathaniel West, even as a young man, was much respected in the church and community, and when he sought the company of the girl at Miss Kelsey's, and later asked her to be his wife, many a village maiden looked on with surprise and envy. He was a silent lover, but his substantial character was like a rock in a weary land to the friendless and homeless girl who had always borne the heat and burden of the day. She had her secret thought, too, that perhaps when the strangeness of the new association had worn away his eyes would oftener rest upon her with that look of deep devotion with which they had softened when he had received her answer, or that he might sometimes even give her a

playful caress. But Nathaniel West, while he would have died for love, would also rather die than to deal it out daily in those precious morsels upon which women's hearts thrive and grow glad and strong. Nathaniel never found fault with his wife, but, on the other hand, he never kissed her. He considered it a weakness. She, however, like most of her sex, could overlook a moderate amount of criticism if it were well interspersed with loverlike attentions.

Mary had not been long married when she had ceased to expect any such demonstrations from the grave, abstracted companion of her life journey. She was too proud to express her disappointment, and she smothered her own inclination to talk about their love, or to betray it in the many small ways for which a genuine woman has no need of a teacher. She set herself to be content to bear the name of a good man, to keep his house in order and prepare his food, to know the run of his business, while her heart ached for that tender communion which the very pain of longing proved to be possible. One night she stood in a dream in a rotunda lined with closed doors. One door was marked

"Wealth," but she did not try the handle. She would have liked more ease from her daily work, but her eyes caught the lettering of other doors much more attractive. One was "Music." She rushed eagerly to open it, but it was securely fastened. "Art" also resisted her strongest efforts to enter. "Affinities" seemed barred to her touch. The last door was marked "Love." It stood ajar. She knocked timidly. A hand with a deep scar in the palm opened the door. She beheld a face so glorious and wise and tender and pure and sympathetic that her soul leaped within her and she cried, "Who art thou, Lord?" And a voice said, "I am Jesus." She saw beyond a beautiful landscape of hills and groves and fountains, and all manner of pleasant fruits and choice flowers.

She awoke, and knew the significance of the vision. Her life was to be in Christ. The alabaster box of her soul's sweetness was to be broken at his feet. The beautiful things of this world were denied her, but the fountain of all blessedness was free to her. She absorbed the Christ-life. She walked in that Light. She found an alchemy that changed her daily tasks

into incense to the Eternal One. Her kitchen became a temple where she did service as the angels. She did not withdraw herself from others. Many a home knew her gentle step and healing sympathy. The plain little meetinghouse became a cathedral when she knelt there. When her children came to her, first Helen, and two years later Eloise, she received them with awe, as one whom God had honored with a great trust, and felt aright that her work was not secondary to any in the universe. Helen was a vigorous child from birth, and well-endowed mentally. She was also beautiful, especially when in animated conversation, for then there was a dancing light in her large dark eyes, and her cheery smile revealed her perfect teeth. Even as a young girl her carriage was marked by its dignified and graceful poise. Eloise was ethereal in her beauty. She was less robust than Helen in body and mind, but with a livelier fancy, a more agile grace. In Helen the father's rugged conscience was dominant over the mother's gentleness. In Eloise there was a singular lack of seriousness, but a remarkable amiability, and a faculty of adaptation to

people that made her a general favorite. Helen had a strong bent to literary pursuits, and Eloise was fond of music, for which she had so much talent as to scorn the drudgery of application, and would therefore forfeit any marked success. Mrs. West had determined from their earliest years that her daughters should receive the advantages that she herself had been obliged to forego, and Helen entered with enthusiasm into her mother's purpose. Eloise had her day-dreams of less serious matters. Sunnyslope was not so remote from the great centers of commercial and social life as to be deprived of all glimpses of the brilliant luxury and ease into which most people put a large income. There were several old homesteads in the village whose doors frequently opened to returning sons and daughters from Boston and New York, who brought with them into the sleepy content of the quaint New England town hints and flavors and sounds of an alluring sort to the delicate and imaginative Eloise. She was more sensitive to a bit of color, to the softness of fine fur, to the fine fragility of a piece of rare china than her sister, but far less responsive than Helen to

a demand upon her moral nature. Self-denial and plodding industry had no charms for her, but she shirked the less desirable tasks of the home so gracefully as to cast a glamour over her delinquencies.

We have left Helen for some moments at her open window, busily engaged with pleasant thoughts. She was now just seventeen years old, and had prepared to enter a certain celebrated college for women. It had never for one moment seemed possible that she could actually go, as her father's means were narrow; but her mother had been often in prayer on the subject, and was fond of quoting to the impetuous girl, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."

A distant relative had most unexpectedly died and left a small house to Mr. West, and he had promised Helen to sell it if possible and put the proceeds into her college course. A purchaser had been found, and on the day before our story opens Mr. West had received the cash that brought Helen's uncertainty to a bright end. She had already been to the seat of the chosen institution, and had passed the entrance ex-

aminations in the most creditable manner. This was of itself enough to fill the girl's cup with delight; but there was yet another element in the brimming elixir, and the consciousness of it softened her eyes and transfused her face and neck with a faint flush. The village doctor had lived just across the street from the Wests before Helen was born, and his son Harry had always been Helen's favorite companion. Harry was two years the elder, and had assumed an air of protection from the first time that they toddled off to infant class together, and Helen had fallen fast asleep on the bench, only saved from a tumble by Harry's sturdy but aching little arm. They were a pair of as mischievous youngsters as ever explored pantry shelves, or decorated Jay's *Morning and Evening Exercises* with Mother Goose pictures. They had shared their village schooldays; and when Harry went out of the place to attend a preparatory school for Yale, Helen had managed by the help of Judge Denham and the minister to keep pace with him, and to surprise him at the next vacation by coming off first in a mutual game of quiz. No word of love or marriage had ever

passed between them, but at the last Easter vacation the hearty good fellowship of childhood and youth had given place to a sort of awkward restraint unintelligible to either. They had joined the church together on a six months' probation, as is the custom in the denomination to which their parents belonged, and were now, in June, to be received with several other young people into full membership. Harry had received special leave of absence, and had arrived home late on Saturday evening. Helen had not seen him yet, but a little note that came on Saturday noon had expressed a desire that the day that marked their Christian lives with a white stone might be memorable also in the annals of their friendship. Helen thought of what she had to tell Harry about her prospect of going to college, but the intuition of what he had to say to her set her heart beating wildly.

A gentle rap at Helen's door caused her to turn swiftly from the window to admit her mother, who stood at the threshold in her white dimity gown, her heavenly eyes glowing with the light of the Presence within her soul.

"Good morning, mamma," said Helen, almost reverently; "come in."

"Good morning, dear," said Mrs. West, kissing Helen's forehead, and softly passing her fingers over the wavy dark hair. "Your father is making the fire, and Eloise is still asleep, so I think that we may have a few moments together. It is a sacred day in your life, my child, and also in mine."

"O, mamma," said Helen, as she drew a rocking-chair forward for her mother and sat down herself on the floor in an old-time childish fashion of hers, leaning her face against her mother's knees, "my heart fairly aches with joy. There's the church, you know, and college and —and—Harry and all!"

Mrs. West sat silent for a few moments, and a neighboring robin filled the room with his song of praise. Then she quoted softly:

> "'Jesus, thou Joy of loving hearts!
> Thou Fount of life! thou Light of men!
> From the best bliss that earth imparts,
> We turn unfilled to thee again.'

"Helen, dear, try this morning to separate yourself from all but the best. You are to

give yourself publicly to God and his church, and I long for your consecration to be not a form alone, but truly of the Spirit."

Again silence, while the sunshine streamed across the white room, and the robin seemed to sing his heart out in the old cherry tree.

"The Father's purpose for each of his children," continued Mrs. West, as she caressed the bowed head beside her, "is to conform each to the image of his Son. You often hear people quote from Romans, 'All things work together for good to them that love God,' as if the 'good' were a general indefinite betterment of condition. But if you read the whole passage carefully you will see that the good the apostle meant is that 'we should be conformed to the image of his Son.' Helen, since I learned that truth it has shone like a star above my life. Not a day and not a duty but is sent to further that glorious purpose. Denials and delights, hard work uninteresting in itself, as well as the hours of rest, sickness and sorrow and disappointment are all the Father's instruments to shape the image. It is slow work, and much of it is painful. Chiseling is tedious, and the

stroke of the hammer startles and hurts, and the polishing process is wearisome, until we get a clear vision of the pattern, Jesus Christ, and know that we are to be like him! This is the prize of our high calling, to stand at last without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, presented faultless in the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Helen, there is no soul so low, so ignorant, so weak but has this possibility wrapped within it. This is why God goes to such expense for us, and why we should pour out our lives for others."

Helen lifted her eyes to her mother's face and said: "Mother, dear, there aren't many such saints as you!"

"Hush, child!" she replied, in tender reproach. "There is nothing of me but the grace of God. I want this morning to impart to you the open secret of all blessedness. You have different sources of joy and pleasure to-day. What I tell you can make you independent of every earthly delight, and still leave you satisfied at the center of your soul, and happy beyond all account. I do not ask you to give up your friend, nor that desire for education which

I have done my best to foster in you, but to give them to God. Giving up and giving to God are two very different experiences. All the pure and good and useful things that we yield to him he takes and utilizes and multiplies and glorifies and pours back into our bosoms in blessed increase of richness and power. The evil we should be glad to let him cast away, for we cannot wittingly keep it and keep him. I did not mean to say so much to you, but you will bear with mother."

Helen pressed to her lips the hands that had become hard and unshapely by years of toil, beautiful hands in the sight of heaven bearing the stamp of the Order of Useful Saints.

"Mamma," said Helen, "I will remember every word. Will you pray with me?"

They knelt together beside Helen's bed, and Mary West prayed for her firstborn with a directness and simplicity of faith that seemed to wing its way to the very heart of love and power. Then they arose and went down to prepare the simple morning meal. Just before the first bell rang for service Harry came over and inquired for Helen, who had disappeared in the

cool depths of the orchard. He walked on up the garden path to the gray gate. He could see the gleam of her white muslin gown between the trees. She suddenly turned and saw him coming rapidly toward her, tall and commanding, eager but self-controlled, and she could not run to meet him as once she would have done. A rush of color swept her face, leaving her pale and faint, but she held out her hand and said:

"I am glad to see you, Harry."

She did not meet his eyes as he took her hand, for quick tears brimmed her own.

"Helen," said he, "did you ever know such a morning, so full of beauty and hope and the glory of God!"

"I've been trying ever since I woke," she replied, "to sing what I cannot put into words. Even the Te Deum does not satisfy me. The robins and the daisies and the sunshine all seem to praise God as I cannot."

"I have not told you, Helen," said Harry, as they slowly strolled toward the board seat between the trees at the end of the path, "that within a few weeks I have received a clear call

to preach the Gospel. You know that father had set his heart on seeing me a famous surgeon, and my studies were begun with that end in view. But the call has sounded in my ears day and night."

"And what do you say, Harry?"

"I have said, 'Wait, wait;' I have said, 'I am unworthy;' I have wept and prayed and besought that another might take my place."

"And wear your crown—O, Harry!"

She looked full in his face now with fear and reproach in her eyes.

"No, Helen, it is all over now. Last night on the train I said, 'Here am I, send me!' I feel as if a mountain had been lifted from me. I told father and mother before breakfast, and at family devotions poor father broke down in his prayer. It is the greatest disappointment of his life. But mother took the prayer right up and went on and thanked God that he had chosen me to bind up the broken-hearted, and afterward we all three had a downright good talk together, and it's all settled; that is—Helen," and he took her hands in his, "dear Helen, will you share my lifework?"

The girl's face was lifted with a love and loyalty thereon that could never know change or doubt or shadow that is cast by turning, a love that could endure silence and absence and death itself and still love on. It was a look like the music of a song without words, and Harry was content with his answer.

Just then the bells warned them that it was time to start for church. It was a memorable service. The plain little sanctuary was beautiful with ferns and roses and bright faces. A number of young men and women took their places at the altar to unite with God's people. Harry and Helen both felt that it was a privilege to bring their new happiness there for the Father's blessing. Poor and fleeting are the joys that he cannot smile upon. Separated by a dozen other candidates, yet conscious of a perfect union of thought and purpose, these two faced each other as they repeated the solemn vows of the ritual. But when they knelt to receive the holy communion they saw no one save Jesus only.

"Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," breathed Helen. It was a pledge that

did not rend her heartstrings, for it seemed to her that her every desire ran parallel with the will of God. That afternoon she told Harry that the door had opened for her into a college career. He had not a nature that would begrudge to a woman the highest development of which she is capable, but the thought that Helen might become attracted by some profession that would discount domestic joys and so sweep her away from him moderated his sympathy with her gratified ambition. He said as much, confessing himself to be selfish beyond remedy, but Helen declared that the highest vocation of any woman is to love and be loved, and that a college course would help her to adorn that calling. So they sat in the orchard all that gleaming afternoon, and built their castles for the future, and mingling with their happy day-dreaming was the sound of the old violin, long since bought back from the gardener; for the child Eloise was playing melodies from the church hymnal, interweaving their stately measures with quaint flights of her own fancy.

The summer vacation passed rapidly, filled

with many outings, readings from favorite books, and studies of birds and wild flowers. Helen performed her share in the household duties as conscientiously as of old, but so absorbed was she in her pleasures that she failed to see that her mother's step was growing feeble. Even when they sat together in the vine-shaded porch, sewing and chatting by the hour, Helen did not notice that the dear hands sometimes dropped their work and lay listless for a time as if unable to take another stitch. It was near the end of the vacation, and Helen's trunk had been brought down into the front hall. Mother and daughter began to realize what it would be to be separated for the first time in their lives, and as Mrs. West packed the trunk, now and then stowing away a little note, a new ribbon, a box of sweets, or a new book, a tear sometimes fell upon the garment she was folding. The night before Helen was to start on her journey to college Mrs. West had put the finishing touches to the pretty gray traveling gown, and had laid it out on the spare-room bed with hat and gloves and even a dainty handkerchief and new pocketbook. Helen had

hovered over the proceeding like a bride over her trousseau, occasionally bestowing a swift hug or kiss upon the dear burden-bearer, when suddenly the scales fell from her eyes and she saw that her mother looked worn and that she breathed with some difficulty.

"Mamma, dear," she cried, "you are ill. I must not go and leave you."

"Dearie, you know that I always feel the warm weather, and am a trifle tired. Then, too, I am such a foolish old mother that it is hard to let you out of my sight. But Eloise is going to be a great deal of company for me. How well the child plays!"

Eloise was practicing on her violin, and the pathetic notes of a simple German air, "Du, du, liegst mir am Herzen," floated up the staircase. Helen could never listen to it again in all the after years without a vision of that moment—the cool, shady front chamber all in pleasant confusion with the final preparations for her journey, the white muslin curtains blowing gently in the breeze, the little vase of late verbenas on the bureau, and her mother's gesture of gentle command to cease the conver-

sation and listen to the young musician. They stood there arm in arm in the doorway for a few moments, waiting to surprise the child with applause, when Harry appeared at the front door, just in time to join in the encore. But Eloise fled with her instrument to her own room, and Harry inquired through the screen door if he might get some supper there, as he was willing to work for it.

Helen came down and asked him what sort of work he could do, and he proposed a game of croquet.

"We don't give peach shortcake for croquet," said Helen, soberly.

"Peach shortcake!" replied Harry. "Lady, give me a hoe, a hatchet, a lawn mower—anything. I'm not above earning shortcake by the sweat of my brow."

"Well, if you really want to work," said Helen, "you may walk down to Mrs. Dean's with me after cream."

They strolled along the pleasant street beneath the elms, whose shadows stretched far into the road in the sunshine. There was a cloud on Helen's brow and in her heart.

"I feel troubled about mother," she said.

"Nothing but the very best can come to your mother," said Harry, gently.

"Then it must be my own self that worries me."

"Is it not true of you also, Helen?"

"What, that nothing but good can come to me? Yes, I suppose so. I believe it with my head, at least."

"No, if you really believed it you would be comforted by it."

"But suppose the 'good' means sorrow and loss and disappointment?" queried Helen.

"And suppose that God labels some of our plans 'not good?'" replied Harry, "Would we still reach out toward them, and weep?"

"Yes, I am sure *I* would," said Helen, half smiling, "being a woman and not a philosopher."

"Well, I'm not going to waste my first sermon on an audience of one," said Harry, cheerily, as he opened Mrs. Dean's gate.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Dean as she hastened to set a jar of cream in Helen's basket, "that your mar is lookin' dreffful peakid. I

wish she'd try cherry pictorial. I come right up on it a year ago."

"What mother needs is a good rest," said Helen, thanking Mrs. Dean for her interest, but she turned away with a sudden pain in her heart, and not even Harry's merry conjectures as to the style of the illustrations in Mrs. Dean's remedy brought a smile to her face.

But when they reached her home her forebodings took flight. Mrs. West greeted them so brightly, and looked so lovely in her white gown, that Helen thought that her cause of fear was imaginary. There was a dainty supper. Harry was in his gayest mood, and even aroused Mr. West out of his usual brown study. Mrs. West had determined that Helen's last evening at home should be a pleasant memory, and no hint of sadness mingled with the happy talk of the future.

After the little feast was cleared away Harry carried Helen off for an hour with his mother. Then they went for a little row on the river. It was a brilliant night, for the full moon revealed every leaf and flower. Helen had a soft, fleecy white shawl draped around her head and

shoulders, and as she sat trailing her fingers in the stream Harry had need to be reminded of his duty as oarsman.

"See," said Helen, "we're headed right for Middle Rock."

"Well, if we're dashed to pieces it is your fault for looking so distractingly angelic," said Harry, glancing behind him, and pulling to the right. "That's one thing I hate about a row-boat on an occasion like this. A fellow must either be a Tantalus or risk a watery grave for two."

"What a happy summer this has been!" said Helen.

"And the best is that it is only the beginning of a lifetime of happy summers and blessed winters," replied Harry.

"We must go back now," said Helen, after an hour had passed all too swiftly. "You know the train leaves early in the morning, and I want a little chat with mother before bedtime."

So they returned, singing as they went, Harry's tenor and Helen's rich contralto floating out on the radiant stillness of the night. In the porch of her home Harry took her face

in his two hands, and said as he kissed her good night:

"Dear girl, I love the ground under your feet!"

"Better the stars over my head!" smiled Helen.

"I fear by the time you have finished college you will be like a star," said he, "brilliant but remote to a poor mortal man like me."

"Don't, dear," she replied, laying her hand lightly on his lips;" starlight is not the best light to read and work by. I only aspire to be more worthy of love, God's love and yours."

It was yet early when she stepped inside the door, but the house seemed strangely still. Eloise had gone to a lawn fête in the village, and her father had not come home from the store, but her mother was not on the couch in the sitting room nor in the large willow rocker on the side piazza.

"Mamma!" she called, but no answer.

She sped up the stairway, and into her mother's room. The slender, white-robed figure was kneeling beside the window. The head was bowed upon her arms. Helen started to with-

draw, thinking that she had disturbed her mother at prayer, but again turned and crept back softly and knelt beside her, putting an arm around the beloved form. Almost immediately, with a sudden, awful fear, she sprang to her feet crying:

"Mamma, dear, dear mamma!"

There was no response. The room was as light as day, but as Helen tenderly lifted her mother's head she saw upon her face the brightness of that land where they have no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to give them light. The next day, upon the floor near the window, Helen picked up a half sheet of note paper upon which had been traced a few faltering lines. The following spring in the verbena bed beneath the casement, they found the pencil that the weak fingers had dropped. The note read as follows:

"DARLING HELEN: Take good care of father and Eloise. God is with you, and with me. The gates are wide—"

It is twenty years later when we resume our story.

CHAPTER II

About an hour's ride from New York city on the outskirts of a sleepy little village stood Mrs. Knight's boarding school for girls. Its somewhat mixed architecture readily yielded to the imaginative mind a hint as to the history of the institution. The central part of the structure was evidently once an elegant private residence whose walls of rough gray stone crowned an elevation that commanded a far-stretching prospect of river and hills. Class ivies had done their best to conceal the fact that the great transverse addition to the original house was of wood; and several pretty cottages about the grounds were also embowered in luxuriant creepers. The wide lawns were shaded by fine old elms and maples, and at the carriage entrance, one on each side of the iron gate, stood two tall, gaunt poplars once named by some schoolgirl "The Monitors."

Fifty years ago the stately stone house was built by a New York merchant for his bride. She was an English girl who had come to

America to visit relatives, little dreaming that her return to England ever after would be but for a visit, and home would be that same semi-barbarous land that returned travelers had portrayed in sarcastic vein. This house and the grounds were her husband's marriage gift to her, for even as that ancient king of Babylon sought to content his mountain-born wife with the flowery terraces of the Hanging Gardens, so with gray walls and velvety, well-shaded greenswards did the American lover plan to make the strange surroundings of a new country seem homelike to his English bride. There were a few joyous years in the new home, but financial losses came, followed by the death of the husband. There were claims against the estate that could not be met by it, and the widow felt that conscience demanded that no creditor should lose while she had any resources. The alternative was before her of sacrificing her home or her own small private fortune. She chose the latter course, and soon found herself in the singular position of sitting down to a dinner of bread and tea in a room where mirrors reflected costly hangings and

gleaming silver. She was quick to determine on her future course. Her only child, a boy, must be reared in the beautiful home where he had been born. She was fully capable of leading him in his studies up to the university doors. She would ask for other people's children to educate with him.

Her beauty and culture and social position made a picturesque setting to her honorable poverty and sad bereavement, and fashionable society made a pet of her school. From the first day it was a success. She taught one generation of children herself with the assistance of the choicest talent she could command. Her son, Leverett, brilliant and promising, when well launched in the law married a young lady of good birth and fine presence, who brought him no other dowry than her own personal attractions. His sudden death left her in a position to accept with gratitude Mrs. Knight's offer of a place as assistant principal in her well-established school. As the years went by Mrs. Leverett Knight became more and more the controlling power in the institution and materially changed its character. She was a

tall, haughty woman, plausible, insincere, dominant, strategic, and always stylish and brilliant. Under her *régime* the school became less conscientious and thorough in its training, but such was its remarkable prestige that the world was long in discovering that standards had been lowered to meet the mental capacities of many whose purses were better supplied than their heads. None but the daughters of the wealthy could pay the enormous tuition fees.

Girls were there from Halifax and Los Angeles, from Montreal and Bermuda, girls whose mothers once tripped through those same corridors, and yawned behind their *Æneid* in the little recitation rooms, and wove their gay fancies under the maples walking hand in hand in the immemorial custom. Some of the girls had brought back to the school the features, voices, and characteristics, and occasionally even the Christian name of those pupils of fifteen or twenty years before, and Mrs. Knight sometimes felt that she must be nearly a quarter of a century younger than she had supposed; and only the sight in the mirror of her snow-white hair would convince her that some

sunny-faced "Alice" bending over a grammar was actually the daughter of a graver and wiser "Alice" presiding over some distant household.

The elder Mrs. Knight was usually called "the Madam" in public, and "Gram" in private, by the second generation of girls. She had grown lovely with the years, but was more and more dependent on her daily nap and a long drive before tea. Her supervision consisted for the most part in an occasional visit to the classes, and in entertaining beautifully at a monthly reception to which each pupil was allowed to invite two friends. One afternoon in each week some four of the boarders took tea with her in her dainty drawing-room, and the heavy snowy table linen, the delicate pink china and fragile cut glass, the rich silver and the single rose at each plate were very attractive to the youthful eyes of her guests. The "tea" was usually chocolate, that beverage beloved by schoolgirls, and there were always rolls of melting lightness and fresh fruit, in the winter, sliced oranges piled like embodied Southern sunshine in a dish of Russian glass, and one kind of delicate cake. There were a

few girls who had been rude enough to whisper that "the Madam's" entertainments consisted of a "lily and a glass of water," but they were promptly and indignantly silenced by the others. These teas came to each quartet but once in a term, and were occasions of great pleasure, for Mrs. Knight was a rare hostess, and had the faculty of putting each guest completely at ease. There was an irresistible attraction in the tones of her clear, soft voice, in the quiet of her shapely hands, in the very folds of her long silken robes. A brilliant conversationalist, her reminiscences of travel and short chats on current events would have delighted any circle, much more the impressionable girls under her care. If Mrs. Knight's winning, cultured, sweet womanhood had been consecrated to Christ how potent for good would have been those little afternoon repasts! How a tender acknowledgment of the Father's love would have glorified the exquisite board! How a few loving words and perhaps a brief prayer and an evening hymn as the twilight crept in at the windows might have infused those young hearts with holy purposes! But

Mrs. Knight was only a lovely apostle of worldliness, with no more comprehension of the needs of a soul than the Venus de' Medici that stood in the bay window.

There was a form of religion in the school. Morning prayer was conducted by the teacher of mathematics, Miss Mallory, and always seemed to partake of the dry and spiritless atmosphere which ever surrounded that very stiff and angular personage. On pleasant Sunday mornings the pupils were conducted to the only church in the village, where a minister with a sepulchral voice that echoed dismally from the plain, colorless walls made the place irksome in the extreme. As Nel Travers whispered to her right-hand neighbor, "It makes me feel as if I want to be wicked."

Our story brings us to a certain Wednesday following the annual Easter vacation. It was a typical April day of sunshine and showers. Morning and afternoon trains left groups of girls at the village station, and the two or three old rockaways and ancient steeds that usually waited hopelessly at the rear platform were kept busy all day long carrying their loads of

chattering and laughing passengers out to the seminary. Within the house there was considerable confusion and but partially suppressed hilarity. The porter toiled along the corridors from time to time beneath the weight of a heavy trunk or valise, the girls flitted in and out of each other's rooms to exhibit new trinkets or talk over the gayeties of the vacation, and through half-closed doors came bursts of merriment and snatches from a late opera.

The rooms were divided into parlors and sleeping apartments. Each parlor had two bedrooms opening into it, thus accommodating four of the girls. As the latter were required to furnish their own rooms, some of the suites were very tasteful and luxurious. Parlor number eight was the admiration and envy of all the occupants of the second floor. The pupils in number eight were all from lavish homes except one of them, Edyth Wilsey, who had no home, but whose taste and means had given the most of beauty and comfort to the place. Just now the pretty little parlor presented a scene of chaos that was attractive even in its apparent hopelessness, being nearly submerged

by the dainty belongings that four merry girls were dragging forth from as many trunks. No pupil was allowed to keep a trunk in her room, and the porter was to call in an hour to take them to the storeroom; but tongues flew faster than fingers. Furs and laces, ribbons and fans, mingled on chairs and tables with boxes of bonbons, new novels and magazines, and silver toilet articles. A lovely little toque wreathed in violets adorned the marble bust of Sir Walter Scott; a jar of mixed pickles, brought tenderly by hand all the way from Baltimore by Eleanor Lee, surmounted the mantel clock; a couple of banjos hung from an easel where St. Cecilia's rapt face shone above her organ keys, and a new chafing dish suggestive of future surreptitious Welsh rarebits peeped out from under a pink organdie evening gown.

The four girls who shared this suite of rooms were in the senior class. Eleanor Lee, dubbed "Melpomene" by the girls, shortened usually to "Mel," was tall, dark, and slender, with a great fondness for acids, satire, and Poe's "Raven." Daisy Leslie, her chum, was a golden-haired, dimpled, easygoing blonde, thoroughly spoiled

at home, but with a soft, comfortable disposition, one of those cushiony people who make excellent padding for the nervous temperaments of others to knock against. Slow, equable, amiable, but saved from insipidity by the very absurdities of her provoking inefficiency, she was also generous and affectionate, and quite a pet in the school. They called her "the Philosopher." Serene Dudley, named "the Princess," was more thoughtful than the other two; as gentle as Daisy, but with an absorbing love for art that had elevated her thoughts above the ordinary ambitions of the fashionable schoolgirl, and had imparted the dignity of a quiet determination to her delicate, expressive face and graceful bearing. There was a dreamy, remote air about her at times, and her facile pencil was apt to stray from the dull French exercises, filling her text-books as full of children's faces as were those of Tommy Traddles with skeletons. She had a vein of humor that lighted up her rather serious nature, and a power of sarcasm that was without bitterness, but was keen enough to be feared. If the girls had dared to express their real feelings in re-

gard to a nickname for Edyth Wilsey they would have chosen "the Mystery," for a mystery she was even to herself. As it was, they named her "Old Lovely."

Twelve years before, the wife of the captain of a Cunard steamship had brought the bright-haired, gray-eyed little girl to Madam Knight. She knew but little about the child, whose father had solicited the kindly offices of the motherly Englishwoman to keep an oversight of her and her French maid during the voyage, and to lodge them safely in the most desirable school accessible outside of New York city. Mrs. Knight was informed that the little Edyth's mother was dead, and as the plea to shelter the child was reinforced by the extreme loveliness of the gentle, almost friendless tiny creature, and a large roll of banknotes that exceeded the cost of a year's board and tuition, Mrs. Knight ventured with many misgivings to receive such a peculiar charge; but the reference to a London banker resulted in a terse but satisfactory reply, and Edyth entered upon a long residence in the seminary. She was then in her seventh year. The maid remained until

her twelfth birthday, but had never been induced to impart any special information about her young mistress.

Edyth's father visited her once in a few years, and as she grew older he arranged long journeys for the summer vacations. He was a dark, silent, stern-visaged man, who spent most of his time in Europe. There was always an unnatural constraint in their relations, and it was with a mutual feeling of relief that they parted. He kept his daughter well supplied with pocket money at times, but there were intervals when she could hardly afford a postage stamp or a pencil. It used to puzzle her greatly, and she learned at the time of the feast to prepare for the famine.

Perhaps the somewhat romantic circumstances of her lot enhanced her natural attractions, but she was indeed a girl of extraordinary beauty of features, disposition, mind, and manners. She never lacked for invitations to spend vacations at the homes of her mates, but she seldom accepted such opportunities, as her father had requested her to avoid visits except with his consent, and he almost always arranged

to keep her at the school when he could not come and accompany her on a pleasure trip. The girls had a pleasant fiction that she was the rightful heir to some throne, kept out of the way in a strange land, while the usurper reigned undisturbed, and perhaps they had come to believe in their own little romance, for they were all her devoted followers.

All the admiration that Edyth received did not cause her to become either vain or overbearing. Underneath all her bright, cheery ways that endeared her to all in the school there was a deep longing for a mother's love and sympathy, a sorrow for the cloud that seemed to hang over her birth, and an unceasing desire to learn something more than her father had ever been willing to communicate to her. Once when walking with him in the mountains his usual distant and forbidding manner appeared to have softened a trifle, and she ventured to speak of what lay nearest to her heart ever since she had discovered that other girls were blessed by a tender love unknown to her life. Mr. Wilsey frowned and bit his mustache a while in silence. Then he told her that her mother

had died in France not long after Edyth's birth, that she was buried over there, and that he wished that she would never refer again to the subject. Edyth asked if he could not give her a photograph of her mother, and he agreed after some hesitation to send her a likeness. It came to her several weeks after he went away, a miniature on ivory in a blue velvet case, the exquisite face of a young girl not very much older than herself. Edyth bowed over the painting in a rapture of wonder and affection.

"She would have been almost twice as old now," she said aloud, "and her eyes would not be so bright, but O, how tender and kind! And her pretty hair would not have so many dear little unruly curls, but she would always have been lovely, and more than all the world to me. O, mother, mother!"

Serene was absent in the studio taking her painting lesson, and Edyth threw herself on the bed in a silent passion of tears. She would not show the picture to the girls, nor even to Madam Knight; for although the latter had a very pleasant way of concealing her selfishness, at heart she was cold and politic, and was no

more like a mother to her pupils than an imitation fireplace with its painted logs and flickering gas jets resembles the grand old-fashioned hearth with its warm corners and genial glow. Edyth would have given anything she had for a mother.

She had spent this Easter vacation in New York city with her father, who had come on from Paris to meet her there. He had loaded her with flowers and pretty trifles, had asked her to order some new gowns, and had taken her freely to the play and the opera. But on Easter morning, when she proposed to go to some church, his anger blazed forth.

"It is my express wish," said he, "that you shall leave religion out of your life. I have my own plan for you. I am bringing you up for the world. You are to shine, shine! You are to have society at your feet. Only two months more, and your school days will be over, and I will open a door for you into a dazzling career of wealth and power. You will have everything that heart can wish."

Edyth trembled from head to foot before the fire in his eyes, and looked down at the carpet.

"I have schemed and toiled and risked everything for this," he went on, "and this church business shall not step in. Do you hear me?" he said in a low but powerful voice, laying a heavy hand upon her shoulder.

Edyth lifted her eyes to his dark, fierce face, and shuddered.

"I will try to please you, father," she faltered.

He saw that he had gone too far, and said in a gentler tone:

"I forgot that I had never told you how deeply I feel on this subject. I hate Christians! I would sooner see you put to death than to have you become one. Now go to your room and get ready for a drive."

The talk had occurred in their private parlor at the hotel. Edyth went to her sleeping room and dallied before the mirror, adjusting her Easter hat mechanically, and thinking of it not at all. She realized now for the first time that her father's habitual reserve was but the mask of qualities that struck dismay and terror to her girlish soul. She saw that she was in bondage to a will unscrupulous and unkind. She felt the iron hand in its handsome, well-

fitting velvet glove. A sense of injustice and its twin emotion of resentment awoke in her heart. Her father was obliged to knock on her door to remind her that the horses were waiting. He was a man of resources, and during the drive he made himself so entertaining and attentive that he succeeded in allaying the impression that he had made upon Edyth. When she left for school he gave her a case containing a string of small but perfect pearls.

"For your graduation," he said. "They belonged to your mother."

A torrent of questions rushed to Edyth's lips, but she restrained them, for her father immediately changed the subject.

Serene's home was in New York, and the two girls had exchanged luncheons and visited the shops together.

"I want you to have this," said Serene, one day in a bookshop, handing Edyth a parcel that she had ordered from the clerk, "but please do not open it until we get back to Gram's.

Now they had returned and were hastily emptying trunks and boxes, Edyth came across the parcel, and exclaimed:

"Serene has kept me in suspense long enough. So here goes!"

Melpomene was having her trials with "the Philosopher," for Daisy, having unpacked her belongings and bestowed them wherever the room presented an available bit of surface, had now sunk down on the rug before the glowing grate with the air of one about to enjoy a well-earned repose. Eleanor was flying nervously about, opening bureau drawers and rushing into closets.

"Now, Daisy Leslie," cried she, "come and put away your clothes! These rooms are a perfect jungle."

"Mel, it tries me to hear you tearing around so," replied the culprit, with a comfortable and provoking little yawn. "Do come and enjoy this splendid fire."

"One vestal is enough under the present circumstances," responded Eleanor, grimly, at the same time casting a wistful look at the ruddy coals.

Edyth had unwrapped the shallow paper box that Serene had given her, and opened it with an exclamation of delight. It contained a large

Easter card with a most exquisite design of white lilies against a delicate azure background. There was also an inscription in silver letters which she did not read.

"If this august body does not object," said Edyth, I'll tack this under that water color by the west window. Come, Mel and Daisy, stop quarreling, and say if this isn't lovely."

"O, it does very well," replied Eleanor, who was fond of deep rich colors. "I never rave over pale pinks and blues, you know."

"No," said Serene, who had just entered with a perfume case in her hand, "Mel should have been born in the tropics, her taste is so gorgeous. She would go wild with delight over a picture that I saw once of Lincoln in red draperies crowned amid the clouds by George Washington becomingly arrayed in green, while an American eagle flapped a pair of purple and yellow wings everhead."

"I don't think that my taste is quite so *à l'Africaine*," laughed Eleanor, "but I do love warmth and richness, and if ever I have a place of my very own I shall call it Sunset Lodge."

"Dreadful place!" said "the Philosopher," languidly. "Green goggles provided for all guests."

"Peacocks and paroquets all over the lawn," said Serene, "and not a blush rose nor a bit of mignonette anywhere; nothing but trumpet vines and sunflowers and those prigs among the flower-people, dahlias."

During the merry chatter of the girls Edyth had stood at the window, silent and abstracted, with the beautiful card in her hand, for a ray of sunshine had slanted through the lace curtain and across the spray of lilies and the words beneath:

> "He died for all,
> That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves,
> But unto Him who died for them, and rose again."

The words were new to Edyth. Was it the sunlight alone that made them glowing and living?

"Not to themselves, but unto Him."

Had the glad Eastertide a deeper meaning than she had found in it? To her it was but the celebration of a strange tradition. How

could the fact that ages before One was said to have risen from the dead have anything to do with her daily life? Why should she live unto Him?

"Who died for them."

"For them," she thought; "perhaps that doesn't mean me!"

"He died for all."

"Why did He die for me?" she queried.

"Edyth, what are you day-dreaming about?"

Serene had repeated her question, and her rallying voice brought Edyth from her reverie. She turned saying:

"What is it, my Princess?"

"I would think you were posing as a model for 'My heart's in the Highlands.' Here, just inhale this new extract, and come back to boarding school."

"Delicious!" said Edyth, thrusting aside her strange thoughts and dropping into an easy-chair. "Let's follow 'the Philosopher's' example, and take a little comfort before tea."

"Yes," said Serene, appropriating the divan, "a whole hour to the tea bell."

"Come, Mel, dear," coaxed Daisy.

"O, the times! O, the customs!" groaned Eleanor, at the same moment sitting down in the willow rocker, and proceeding to open a bottle of olives as an offset to the box of chocolates that Edyth was untying.

"Does it seem possible," said Serene, "that we are beginning our very last term?"

"I think we will realize that fact on Monday," replied Edyth, "when we receive the subjects for our graduating essays."

"O, girls, how can you mention it!" wailed Daisy, her speech rendered rather indistinct by a caramel.

"Cheer up, my love," said Eleanor, "the wind shall be tempered to the shorn lamb. Won't it be overpowering to hear you expressing your opinion, or, rather, Mrs. Knight's opinion, of Lord Bacon's essays, or reviewing Gibbon!"

"Jeannette Herkimer will have the salutatory," she added after a pause, "and of course 'Old Lovely' will have the valedictory. Then hurrah for life!"

"I've no doubt we will wish ourselves back here many a time," said Serene. "My sister Belle says that society is a bore."

"I don't know much about it," said Daisy, "but I've sat on the stairs and listened many a night when mamma has had her receptions, and just longed to grow up and dance all I like and eat ices at midnight. Next fall I can!"

"I wonder sometimes if we were born just to eat and dress and dance and be jolly," said Eleanor; "only you can't always be jolly; that's the trouble!"

Edyth glanced at the western window. The sun had set and even the lilies on the Easter card had become dim.

"That they which live should not live unto themselves."

She did not need to see the words. She could not forget them.

"Mercy, Mel!" cried Daisy, "how can you speak of trouble! I don't like to think of it."

"'Once upon a midnight dreary,'" began Eleanor, in a deep alto voice.

"There, Mel, that is sufficient," interposed Serene. "Do leave that old bird of yours on his perch. Here's Edyth looking as wise and solemn as ten ravens."

"Do I?" said Edyth, with a faint smile.

"Perhaps it is because I am not wise that I look so solemn. If I could know what life really is and how to live it I would be glad."

"Our cozy little chat is getting as heavy as one of Dominie Vanderhof's discourses," pouted Daisy.

"Penalty for leaving our work undone," said Eleanor, rising.

"Suppose we finish our regulating," said Edyth, "for you know we must pay our respects to Gram and H. R. H. after tea."

"Daisy was the promoter of all this indolence, so she shall be the first to go to work," declared Eleanor.

Whereupon the reluctant "Philosopher" was lifted bodily from the rug and deposited in her empty trunk, from which she was not allowed to stir until she had promised to do her share in bringing order out of the prevailing confusion.

CHAPTER III

Many miles from Mrs. Knight's seminary, the quiet village of Sunnyslope lay among the hills of Massachusetts. Its wide streets were lined with comfortable old-fashioned homes, each with its drooping elms, box-bordered garden walks, and spreading lilac and syringa bushes. In the center of the village was the Common, overlooked by the Congregational church, the townhouse, and the ancient academy, whose bell had called several generations to thread the mazes of the multiplication table and endure the more subtle tortures of mental arithmetic. It is the same dignified, peaceful settlement as it was twenty years ago, for its drowsiness has never been startled by the whistle of factory or locomotive. The little frame church where Mary West's face used to suggest thoughts of heaven has been replaced by a more modern structure of brick, but the brown house where she once lived, and the orchard and the river where Harry Reynolds and Helen West had spent their happiest sum-

mer, seem all unchanged. Public affection had so far triumphed over public common sense in the preservation of the academy. All agreed that a new building was a necessity, and that the old structure was a disgrace to the community, but to many of the villagers the schoolhouse was only less dear than the family homestead, and they were proud to say that Ex-Senator Lowell sat there, and Judge Wellford here by the window, and a certain star in the ecclesiastical world now shining on the Pacific coast had its rise from yonder corner.

It was the same afternoon on which Edyth Wilsey returned from her Easter vacation. The sunlight streamed through the narrow-paned windows of the academy, framing golden and brown heads in a haze of celestial glory, especially that of Bobby Blake, who had surpassed himself all day in impish ingenuity. It lingered over the rude initials on the old green desks, many of which were carved by hands long since returned to the dust, and blazed upon the large map of the world on the east wall, shining impartially on China and the United States at the same time.

The face bending over the teacher's desk was pale, strong, tender, and womanly. No stranger could be content with merely a passing glance at its noble features; but neither the firm, sweet mouth, the dark, luminous eyes, nor the white brow shaded by prematurely silvered chestnut hair gave the real charm to that countenance. The attraction lay in its expression, an indescribable illumination from within, the mark of the Spirit only attained in the furnace of some long and bitter sorrow. Twenty years had left their impress on Helen West, but they had not robbed her of beauty, and they had brought to her something far better than youth. She was restless that afternoon, although outwardly calm. Occasionally she glanced at the tall, antique clock which the Rev. Ephraim Goodsoldier had bequeathed to the academy. It was a melancholy old timepiece, and struck the hours in a minor, elegiac tone as if lamenting its former owner. For many years it had occupied a certain dusty corner in the Rev. Ephraim's study, keeping guard over Calvin's Institutes and the rows of serious leather-covered volumes that reached from floor to

ceiling, and watching on many a midnight the finishing touch on some weighty discourse on election. So thoroughly had the old clock become imbued with the atmosphere of that sanctum that its slowly swinging pendulum seemed to its owner to say, "Total depravity, total depravity." On being removed to the academy, and looking down on the incorrigible Bobby and his train, it gathered fresh assurance of the verity of its favorite theme, and lifted up its voice with renewed vigor. But not even Miss West understood its message.

"One would never dream of writing 'Tempus fugit' over that timepiece," she said. "'Time tarries' might do, but 'Time flies' would be sheer disrespect to the stately old aristocrat."

It was nearly three o'clock when Miss West looked up for the fiftieth time that afternoon to the dial. The day had been an unspeakably trying one, and had jarred upon every sensitive nerve, but that was not the reason of her eagerness to escape from the hum of the schoolroom. During the recess little Annie Bell Stokes had brought to the desk an offering of molasses peppermint drops wrapped in a liberal piece of

newspaper. Annie Bell had a generous heart, but very limited ideas as to value and fitness. At Christmas time, attracted by its red and golden magnificence, she had presented Miss West with a mustache-cup bearing the inscription "To my Husband," and but few days passed without some distressing token of her regard. Miss West groaned inwardly over the peppermint drops, having a very particular abhorrence of that dainty, but she received them with a kindly smile for the child. Annie Bell looked around when she had reached the door to see if the teacher was partaking of the treat, and saw Miss West suddenly drop her head upon the desk. The child rushed back exclaiming, "O, teacher, are you sick?"

There was no reply until the question was repeated, when Miss West half raised her head and said quietly, "No, dear, run away; that's a good girl."

A few moments more, and the time for recess was over. However much Miss West desired to be alone, she must ring the bell, and call in the tiresome little faces and restless feet. She must hear the class in the fourth reader stumble

through "Rienzi's Address to the Romans," and watch the third class in arithmetic add the long double rows of figures on the blackboard. She must read and correct fifteen compositions on "Spring," each one beginning, "Spring is the pleasantest time of the year," with an occasional variation in the adjective. She must hear a class in geography bound the Middle States, and the grammar class parse ten lines of "Thanatopsis." But before she walked to the window to summon the children from Prisoner's Base and London Bridge, she carefully smoothed out and laid in a drawer the piece of paper that had inclosed the candy, which she had transferred surreptitiously to the stove. At last the hands of the clock pointed to the hour of deliverance. Bobby Blake and several others deserved to be kept after school. Maria Green had missed her entire grammar lesson, and Johnny Taylor had bounded Pennsylvania on the north by Massachusetts, and ought to be detained. Might she not let them all go home together to-night, good, bad, and indifferent? The temptation was a strong one, but she would not relax the discipline of the school for mere

personal gratification. So the few that had passed through the day's ordeal without demerits were dismissed, and the culprits and drones remained for another hour. When the clock struck four the array of partially eaten apples, bottles of licorice-water, knives, and a gray flannel Jumbo that had been confiscated at different stages of the day's proceedings were returned to their respective owners, and the last tippet and dinner pail vanished hilariously through the doorway. The room was silent then except for the slow, steady voice of the old clock, that seemed to the weary teacher to say, "Gone home, gone home," with unusual cheeriness.

She took from the drawer the sticky and rumpled piece of newspaper, went over to a window and sat down there. The paper was a third of a page published at Troy, N. Y. She remembered that the Stokes family had had a relative from Troy visiting them the summer previous. The date of the paper had not been torn off. It was August of the preceding year. The paragraph that had fixed Miss West's attention was part of a chatty letter from Saratoga

by "our special correspondent." It read thus: "Among the late arrivals at 'The States' is the successful speculator Laurance Wilsey, accompanied by his daughter, Miss Edyth Wilsey. Although yet a pupil at Mrs. Knight's celebrated seminary, Miss Wilsey attracts much attention, not only from the fact that she is an heiress, but because of her great beauty and grace. Another year, and society will welcome this new star to its firmament."

Miss West read these trivial words over and over again with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"And I have never seen her," she said aloud. "My darling, my darling!"

Just then the janitor came in to attend to the fire, and Miss West hurriedly donned her hat and shawl, and walked with quick, nervous tread across the Common and down the street to her home. The brown house on Elm Street that had been her birthplace and her home from childhood was now her boarding place. She retained a couple of rooms for her own use. The Reynolds place across the street had passed into the hands of strangers. Helen had suc-

ceeded in her simple apartments in giving expression to something of her own beautiful inner life, and so with inexpensive materials she had produced effects more pleasing than might be found in the magnificent boudoir of her who is not a daughter of the King. Her sitting room had been once her mother's bedroom. It was in a southwest corner, and so had plenty of sunshine. She had an Easter lily every spring. There was one now in a bracket by a window. It was just bursting into glorious purity and fragrance. Helen said it preached to her every day from the text, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly."

There were only two pictures on the walls. One was a fine photograph of Raphael's heaven-inspired gift to the world, the "Madonna di San Sisto." It was his to illuminate for grateful, wondering hearts through many centuries that blessed prophetic word "Immanuel." The other was a large engraving of a marine scene, but with no sail in sight; only the great swelling billows dashing their spray on a rocky coast. Born as she was far from the sound or scent of

the sea, this picture was a constant enjoyment to Helen. She often felt that the sight of it was like a bit of a vacation. There was an open fireplace in the room, a comfortable easy-chair, and a wide, low couch with several bright cushions. In one corner stood a small table and a rocking-chair. This table never held anything but Helen's Bible, a notebook and pencil, and a photograph of her mother in a simple oak frame. No one but Helen knew that between the back of the frame and the picture was a slip of paper, the little note she had found on the floor of that very room the night her mother went to the better country.

There was a singular lack of bric-a-brac in this room, a refreshing absence of cups and saucers, china images, and ornate concoctions in silk and wool. Even the wide mantelpiece had escaped the plague of pettiness that assails so many such, and only a handsome little clock, a vase, and a really choice match-holder confronted the daily dustcloth. Helen's two extravagances were in the freshness and daintiness of her white muslin curtains, which were never allowed to suggest the need of house-

cleaning, and in the matter of her evening light. The flame must be the broadest and brightest to be had, and the lampshade white and softly luminous. This table never lacked a delightful book or choice periodical. But the real heart of the room was the low bookcase in the space between the hearth and the southeast corner. It was a peculiar collection of books, dear and significant to their owner. Each volume was an intimate friend, each wore the imprint of genuine and affectionate usage. They were not arranged on the shelves with any thought of analogy or chronology, but, like Elizabeth Prentiss' idea of the saints of all ages in heaven, they were "all mixed up together." There were no stately rows of "Complete Works" in gorgeous bindings, but nearly all the immortals in literature were represented. It was a never-ending wonderment to Helen that she could have the very best of Emerson and Ruskin and Robert Browning more truly than if she could have met and known them in the flesh. "The Choir Invisible" sing more entrancingly than they whom we see amid the commonplaces of life. The genius who would flee

our company, after all, shares his most sacred and uplifting thoughts with us. The newsboy on the street, if he will, may read the love-letters of the Hawthornes and the Brownings, letters that were kept under lock and key even from dearest friends. Every one of Helen's books meant something as a gift or as a personal sacrifice. Her wardrobe was usually the sufferer, not in neatness, but in variety. When she invested once in a good copy of Carlyle's French Revolution by doing without a new winter bonnet, she had the satisfaction of knowing that there are single passages in that book worth all the new hats in Christendom. Helen had a swinging shelf over the table where her Bible lay, that held only devotional books. All of them were shabby and underscored and tear-stained, an *edition de luxe* to God and the angels.

It was to this quiet, bright little corner in a very lonely world that Helen came home from school on this afternoon that has renewed our acquaintance with her. She put away her hat and wrap and applied a match to the sticks on the andirons. A bright flame was roaring up

the chimney by the time she returned from her sleeping-room with a little rosewood box in her hands. She sat down in her big chair, and leaned back a few moments with closed eyes as if she dreaded to open the box. Then she unlocked it, and took from it an old daguerreotype. The lovely face of a girl of seventeen looked out at her.

"Sweet little sister Eloise!" she said. "So many years in heaven, and your baby-girl almost a woman. I cannot realize it."

There were three time-stained notes and a scrap or two of newspaper in the box, but although Miss West knew them by heart she read each one over and over again. The first note she had found on her dressing-table one June morning eighteen years before. As she took it out of the box to-day she could seem to inhale the breath of the clustering roses that wreathed the casement. It ran thus:

"Dear Nel: When you read this I shall be on the train for New York. It breaks my heart to leave you and father in this way, but I cannot give up my dear Laurance. It seems a poor return for all that you have done for me since

mother left us, but I think one of these days when you see how very good and kind Laurance is to me you will forgive

"Your naughty but loving little sister,

"ELOISE.

"P. S.—Lots of kisses."

Then there was a notice cut from a New York daily of the marriage of Laurance Wilsey to Eloise West of Sunnyslope.

The next note was as follows:

"MY DEAR SISTER: My husband has forbidden me to write. You cannot wonder that he feels as he does, knowing how you regard him. He is away from me a good deal, but I have lovely silk gowns and diamonds and a carriage, and would be quite happy if he were not so busy, and I could see you and father. Do not worry about me. I must not write any more for a while, for he would be very angry.

"Your loving

"ELOISE.

"P. S.—I hope the white asters are doing well this fall."

The third note was dated a year and a half later at Marseilles, France.

"My Darling Sister Helen: I asked L. to write to you about the birth of my darling baby-girl last May. I did not get strong very fast, and so they brought me over here, but I am not so well as when I came. L. will take me home to America before long, and I must see you even if I have to walk to you. The baby is very lovely, but they do not let me hold her, because the least thing tires me so. I often think of the trouble that I have caused you and dear father. Will you forgive me? I wish I could hear mother read the chapter about the Good Shepherd once more. L. will not let me have a Bible, but I lie awake at night and think and think, and many of the dear old verses come back to me, and I can hear the robins singing in the old cherry tree by the kitchen door. I wish father would take me in his arms to-night, I am so tired. My maid will post this letter, but you must not write. My heart aches for your dear faces. Eloise.

"P. S.—I want a drink from our well. Is my blue china mug broken?"

Another newspaper scrap contained the notice of the death of Eloise a few days after the date of her last letter.

Helen closed and locked the little box, but sat for a long time with it in her lap, looking into the fire, but through the fire to the past. The first sorrow of her life was her mother's death, and close upon that followed the disappointment about her college course, for she could not forsake the trust that her mother had left to her. Neither her father nor sister knew with what bitter tears she took up the cares that her mother had laid down. Even Harry's sympathy failed her here, for he was quite as well satisfied to have her forego the ambitious flight she had planned for herself. She had to content herself with such reading and study as could fill odd niches in the day.

Eloise gave both Mr. West and herself much anxiety. She grew very beautiful, had a keen desire for pleasure and fine clothing, and developed a determined will of her own, though she always treated her father with respect, and overwhelmed Helen at times with demonstrations of affection. Eloise attended church

regularly with her father and sister. It was there that Laurance Wilsey first saw her one morning in the springtime. He had come from New York to Sunnyslope on Saturday with a friend of his, a young lawyer who had business in the vicinity for a city firm, and had strolled carelessly into the church that Sunday morning to amuse himself with what he thought would be the rustic attire and manners of the congregation. When Eloise West entered the pew directly in front of him he forgot his quest of amusement. Before many minutes had elapsed he had determined to make the acquaintance of the dainty girl, who was as fresh and sweet as the cluster of arbutus on her bodice.

Laurance Wilsey was a living lie in all things except his towering worldly ambition. His very name was one that he had assumed when he ran away from a humble home in the West. In appearance a gentleman, he was in reality coarse and cruel; in business occupying ostensibly a lucrative position with a wholesale house, he was secretly piling up gains from the gaming table. He did not use intoxicating liquors because in that way he would have en-

dangered the great end of his desire, namely, to be a very rich man of leisure, and secure in the adulation of the fashionable world. Intense love of self, and consequently of money, power, luxury, and pleasure; a semblance of morality when it would favor his designs; the unforgetting, unforgiving disposition of an Indian; and a determination never to be thwarted in his plans even at the cost of precious things, were characteristic of this man. He had no more idea of real Christianity than a Hottentot. In person, he was rather attractive to the careless observer, as he had a tall, stalwart, well-proportioned figure and was always faultlessly attired. His dark, striking face was called handsome by those not quick to discern thereon the evil bias of the man's nature. A veneering of fine manners, and the art of agreeable conversation when he chose to emerge from his habitual reticence, made him an acceptable acquaintance to many superficial people.

At this time he was thirty-five years of age, and with no intention of marriage until he might take that step to his great social advantage. He spent several days in Sunnyslope, and

adroitly managed to gain admission to the humble West homestead and establish an acquaintance. He returned to the city, but a few weeks found him again in the little village, and it was evident that Eloise was the magnet that had drawn him back. His admiration of the pretty country girl and her violin playing would have been but a passing fancy had not Mr. West soon begun to show signs of disapprobation of his attentions. Helen also made him ill at ease by her cool dignity. This angered him and intensified his interest when it might otherwise have flagged. To gain any point in the face of opposition was a keen, supreme delight to him. Eloise was flattered beyond expression by so stylish and handsome a lover, and turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances of her father and sister. Her pleasure-loving nature was like a leaf tossed in the wind. Laurance Wilsey tried in vain to win over Mr. West and Helen. At last he asked the consent of Mr. West to an engagement, and was met by a decided refusal.

"You talk of wealth, of travel, you can give my thoughtless little girl," said he. "Can you

give her the love of a heart loyal to your God? No, Mr. Wilsey, I cannot trust you with my child's best interests."

Laurance Wilsey left the house muttering something about "that crazy old fool of a Methodist," and went home to New York, from whence he wrote to Helen begging her to intercede for him. Helen replied as decidedly as her father had spoken. Eloise appeared very subdued and even unusually affectionate for a week or two. Then one morning her room was empty, and the little note lay on Helen's dresser. Mr. West was cut to the heart, and knelt hours before God in his own room. Helen was stunned at first, then thoroughly indignant with that terrible, calm wrath born of injured, unappreciated self-immolation, and when Eloise's first letter arrived evil overcame good in her soul, and she wrote long and bitterly in reply. The next week Mr. West was stricken with paralysis, and lingered for weary years in helplessness. In his sick room Helen, at first rebellious and sore at heart in her lot, grew slowly into a knowledge of the beauty of the Father's will concerning his children, a knowl-

edge that brought a deep blessedness into her life. She thought often of what her mother had said to her the radiant morning that she joined the church. She understood it now. Her severest trial lay in the sundering of her relations with Harry Reynolds. He was called to be a foreign missionary, but Helen was bound more really than by chains of iron to the poor, helpless old man who depended upon her for everything but breath. Harry declined to be set free from the engagement, but Helen had insisted. She would not even consent to a correspondence, much as the refusal cost her.

"I want you to begin your new life entirely unfettered by the past. Your parents are gone, and I, too, wish to disappear from all but your loving memory."

"Helen, if you cared as I do you simply could not talk in this way."

"It is because I care so much more than you can ever know that I have made this decision," said she. "The physicians all agree that my father will probably live for years. "I cannot consent to subject you to the conditions in which I am placed."

In vain he pleaded and argued his cause.

"You are free," declared Helen.

"I cannot be free," said he. "I am bound by a thousand precious memories, by a perfect companionship, by a love stronger than death. I can do no other way than wait for you, dearest."

It was his final word. She had asked him not to write, but as the weeks went by and no letter came, no word either of the steamship in which he sailed, she was conscious of passing into a darker room in the school of suffering than she had yet known. It was hard to tell him not to wait for her, even though she knew that he would. But now that she was assured that the waiting for her would be on the shores of another life, and hope was indeed buried in regard to meeting again here, she realized that a good deal of her earthly content had its roots in his affection and the will of God had been adorned by this pure, tried friendship. A deeper lesson lay before her, to love that will for itself alone, unattended by anything dear or sweet or cheering to the human heart. At the Master's feet she learned the lesson victoriously,

and found it possible to say "Thy will be done" not only with resignation but with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. She had long since written to Eloise asking forgiveness for her first letter, but only Laurance Wilsey knew the destination of the pleading, tear-dimmed sheet. When the homesick little missive came from France forbidding a reply, she could only commit the lamb in the wilderness to the Good Shepherd. She was sure that he would find it and lay it on his shoulder. When the death notice came she felt strangely comforted. Her father's death left her alone in the world. The teacher at the old academy was married, and Miss West applied for the position, passed a most satisfactory examination, and was accepted. Countless times she thought of the motherless baby of Eloise, and wondered if it yet lived, and longed with an unutterable longing to take it in her arms. The years had passed with no word of information until that afternoon when the Troy paper came into her possession. Her soul was stirred to the depths. Her sister's daughter was living and no longer a child, but soon to take a woman's place in

the world. And who would claim that young life—Christ or mammon? Already the world, attracted by her youth and beauty, was ready to receive her into its glittering whirl, and what preparation had she to meet its temptations and disappointments? Great tears rolled slowly down Helen's cheeks. Respected and loved as she was by all the village people from the Wellfords on the hill down to lame Jimmy at the blacksmith's, she had no kindred of whom she knew anything except this one young girl, and she so nearly and tenderly related and yet an utter stranger. Helen reached out for the Bible that had been her mother's, and then dropped upon her knees sobbing like a child. After a little she felt that she was not alone. The room was pervaded by a Presence that hushed her troubled spirit into calm. Christ was there, saying as gently as on his resurrection morn, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Then her loneliness and desire found words.

"O, Jesus, my Saviour!" she cried. "Keep my darling from the evil that is in the world. Lead her to thyself; and O, if it be possible, may we know and love each other."

She opened the torn Bible and read the twenty-third Psalm. Then, arising from her knees refreshed and quieted, she sang softly, as she stepped about the room, now illuminated by the sunset:

"If what I wish is good,
And suits the will divine,
By earth and hell in vain withstood,
I know it shall be mine.
Still let them counsel take
To frustrate his decree;
They cannot keep one blessing back,
By Heaven designed for me."

She did not know what that same hour had brought to Edyth Wilsey, many miles away, but she knew that God is love and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. But even while she prayed the silver-worded Easter message had flashed in the sunlight upon Edyth Wilsey's eyes into her very heart.

CHAPTER IV

"The melancholy days have come,
The saddest of the term,"

misquoted Eleanor Lee as she stood on the hearth rug and held a sealed envelope at arm's length.

"When each fair maid with fearful heart
Her subject shall discern,"

continued Edyth, looking at a similar envelope of her own with mingled dread and curiosity.

"It's no use, girls," groaned Daisy. "I simply cannot get courage to open mine. "The Princess" ought to begin, she's the oldest."

"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head," said Serene, drawing a long silver arrow from her hair, and letting a mass of auburn curls ripple over her shoulders. "I suppose I may as well leap into the chasm."

She cut open her envelope with the arrow and took therefrom a piece of paper.

"O, this isn't so bad," she exclaimed, complacently, "'Art in America.' A very nice subject, after all."

"It had better be 'Art in Rome,'" suggested Eleanor, picking up Serene's Roman history that laid open on the table with a caricature of the assistant principal on the margin of the next day's lesson.

"Never mind my scrawls, Mel," replied Serene. "It is your turn now to break the seal."

Eleanor turned her envelope over and over with a most provoking air of deliberation, quoting Tennyson:

> "'Take, take, break, break,
> It may break my heart.'"

"Do hurry, Mel," said Edyth.

Whereupon Eleanor produced the mystic slip and read aloud, "'The Works of George Meredith.' Mercy, girls, what do I know of that man or his books!"

"Never mind, if you aren't posted now," said Serene. "Gram and the encyclopedia will tell you all you need to know, and more than anybody wants to hear on a hot June morning. Anyhow, it will look well on the program."

"Guess I'd better scribble about 'Shams,'"

muttered Eleanor. Then, in a brighter tone to Edyth, "Proceed, my dear."

"No," said Edyth, "the valedictory comes last. It's 'the Philosopher's' turn."

"Well, I just can't," said Daisy, on the verge of tears." I never dreaded anything so much since I was young enough to be shut in the nursery closet. There! Take the tiresome thing and find out for yourselves!"

She tossed the envelope into Edyth's lap and went over to the piano and began to play a waltz.

"Come back, Daisy!" cried Edyth, "you have the nicest subject of any."

" 'Mary's Little Lamb?' " inquired Eleanor, meekly.

"No," said Serene, looking over, " 'Lady Jane Grey.' "

"Lady—who?" asked Daisy, wheeling around on the piano stool.

"Lady Jane Grey," replied Serene. "Such a sweet subject."

"Well, who was she, anyway?" continued Daisy; "I've forgotten. O, no, I haven't, either," clapping her hands; "wasn't she mar-

ried to the man who wrote the piece about 'The curfew tolls'—you know—'Gray's Eulogy,' or something like that?"

"O, you little goose!" exclaimed Eleanor; "you mean Gray's 'Elegy.' No, he wasn't a relative. Don't you remember the lovely young lady who was put to death in the tower because—"

"Now, never mind, Mel," said Daisy, resuming her playing, 'I don't care anything about those dreadful things. I cannot write an essay, and I shall ask to sing a ballad instead."

"Suppose they cut two or three inches off from your diploma, Miss Leslie," playfully suggested Serene.

"O, papa will pay my way through," replied Daisy, nonchalantly.

Edyth had now opened her envelope.

"This is a curious topic," said she, a shade crossing her sunny face.

"What is it?" came in a trio from the others.

"'After School—What?'" read Edyth.

"Easy enough, I must say," rattled Eleanor. "For me, a rich husband, a topaz necklace, and fifty consecutive nights at the theater."

"'After School—What?'" repeated Serene, half scornfully. "I can tell them readily. Travel and art studies for me. Days and days in the grandest galleries in Europe!"

"Shopping, and dancing, and singing for me," laughed Daisy.

"I do not care to talk about it to-night, girls," said Edyth, gravely. "I begin to think that there is something more to life than we have ever realized."

"There, Edyth, you are getting dyspeptic and blue again," said Eleanor. "I don't see what ails you of late."

"I know," said Eleanor. "She is preparing to drag poor old Dominie Vanderhof to the altar, and so assumes the solemnity suitable to the mistress of the manse."

"Nonsense, Mel," replied Edyth. "I'm sure I don't enjoy my serious thoughts at all, but they will come. I can't believe that life is just a merry-go-round."

Silence fell on the little group for a few moments. Then Serene said, gayly:

"'After School—What?' I'll tell you, girls. Let's go away together for a few weeks this sum-

mer, and finish our schooling with a grand frolic. My mamma would chaperone us."

"Capital!" exclaimed Eleanor. "Where shall it be?"

"Newport?" suggested Edyth.

"Or Saratoga?" said Daisy.

"No," replied Serene, "not any such stylish place as those. Some nice, comfortable resort where we need not turn ourselves into fashion plates."

"Mamma has a friend who is always talking of a place below Long Branch, called Asbury Park," remarked Eleanor. "I imagine that it might answer our purpose."

"Well, we can decide all that later," said Edyth, taking up her German dictionary. "I must study every minute between now and bedtime."

"After School—What?" Far into the night Edyth Wilsey lay thinking of those simple words. There floated through her brain a fragment from some sermon that she had once heard, that compared life with a school, and with the memory came the question, After life —what?

"O," she said to herself, "I wish I had some one to tell me what I ought to do. Everything is so confused in my mind. It is a strange thing to be alive; and then to know that one must die sometime and go out alone into the darkness; that is stranger still. I wish I need not think of such things. They make my heart heavy. O, mother, mother! If you had not died you would help me, I know!"

Edyth quietly cried herself to sleep. Poor child! She did not know that the God of all light and comfort was even then "not so far away as even to be near."

The days sped on to the commencement season. The graduating exercises at Mrs. Knight's seminary always attracted many guests from the city and the surrounding country. The broad piazzas and beautiful grounds were illuminated by hundreds of Chinese lanterns. A favorite orchestra from New York was concealed in a bower on the lawn. The great drawing-room, the library, and the spacious schoolroom beyond all overflowed with roses. The class motto in Greek, selected because it sounded well and looked pretty when written, adorned the arch

of a bay window. The eight graduates, with shining eyes, heightened color, and delicate attire, were lovelier in the sight of parents and friends than ever before. It is the prerogative of the girl graduate to be "sweet." Even an ordinarily unattractive woman takes on something of grace and beauty on her marriage day. The same is true of the girl who has just stepped for the last time from the schoolroom door, and stands looking out into life with a world of sunny expectancy in her heart.

Mrs. Knight never allowed the programs of these occasions to become monotonous nor irksome. The classes were usually small. The essays were brief and well interspersed with music and recitations. This seminary was still an especial pet of society, and there was always a brilliant display of jewels and laces and shimmering satins. The elder Mrs. Knight appeared like the dignified and gracious sovereign of a wide realm, and as her snowy head and stately figure, attired in a robe of richest gray silk, moved about among the guests, and the haughty, handsome Mrs. Leverett Knight was seen here and there, a striking and elegant per-

sonality, many a fan swayed back and forth in maternal hands with an air of profound satisfaction.

As Edyth Wilsey took her place upon the platform there was a hum of admiration. Many eyes were turned toward her father, who stood tall and dark and distinguished-looking in the doorway; but his stern features did not betray the pride and ambition that surged through his heart as he looked upon the fair girl before him. Involuntarily his thoughts turned back to that spring Sunday morning in the little frame church at Sunnyslope when he first saw Edyth's mother with the cluster of arbutus on her breast.

"The girl is very like her," he said to himself, "only with a stronger frame, a stronger will, too. I hope that she doesn't get any odd notions into her head. She shall make a grand match. But what is the fol-de-rol she is reading?"

Edyth had thought and studied faithfully on the subject assigned to her, but the essay was not a collection of trite observations such as the ordinary schoolgirl is apt to inflict upon a

suffering audience. It was the simple expression of an earnest desire to know the truth and to do it, with between the lines a pathetic appeal for help and light that would have gone right to the heart of anyone capable of hearing it. But the ladies in the audience were thinking more of the quality of her mull and lace, and the probable value of the string of pearls that she wore for the first time; while the men admired her face and voice and conjectured about her father's wealth. Mr. Wilsey felt a serious import in his daughter's unpretentious paper even while he did not clearly comprehend it. His brow contracted, but he thought, "A season at the Springs will cure her of such nonsense as this about truth and light." The frown disappeared as he heard the applause and saw the flowers that attended her graceful retreat from the platform. After the diplomas were awarded and the class hymn sung the graduates stood under an arch of roses in the drawing-room to receive the congratulations of their friends. Then the schoolroom was cleared of chairs, and the alluring strains of the "Invitation to the Dance" drew a gay bevy of young men and

maidens in that direction. Edyth glided through the first waltz accompanied by Robert Annesley, the son of a railroad magnate, and Mr. Wilsey looked on with silent satisfaction. Edyth refused to engage herself for any other dance, and asked to be taken to her father.

"Come, father," she said, slipping her arm through his, "let us take a turn on the lawn. It is so warm indoors."

"Are you so soon tired with the dancing?" queried her father, as they moved toward the door.

"I am not fond of it," she said, and a wave of color swept over her face.

"Somehow it seems to me that waltzing cheapens a young girl; makes her less choice to her own self, at least."

"Nonsense!" replied her father, with irritation. "Don't make war on the customs of society. I have spared no expense on your education, and now I want you to sail in and make a sensation. I won't put up with any puritanic notions. Do you hear me?"

They had taken their places on a broad settee in a sheltered corner of the piazza, and, al-

though Mr. Wilsey playfully pulled a stray curl as he spoke, there was a grim resolve in the words that Edyth felt like the grip of muscles of steel. She did not love the grave thoughts that had been haunting her of late. Why not banish them? It must surely be her duty to obey her father. She must have been superhuman not to think it agreeable to have plenty of money at her disposal, and no end of good times planned for her.

"How did you like my essay, father?" she said.

"O, it was a bit preachy, was it not? I can't have such ideas in your head. I make it a point never to hear any sermons myself, and I don't want my only child, and a girl at that, to turn parson. 'After School—What?'" he quoted with a scornful smile. "You should have told them of the career of conquest of a beautiful woman with plenty of money behind her."

"May I ask your plans for the summer?" said Edyth.

"We leave here to-morrow morning for New York. I suppose it will take you a couple of weeks to get ready for Saratoga and Lake

George, where I mean to go with you by the fifteenth of next month. After you give your orders to Madam Moray for an outfit I must induce some kind friend to take you under her wing while I am off on a short business trip to Colorado. I would take you along, only that the journey would prove tiresome at this time of the year, and I think you need a rest after your struggle with ologies and isms."

Daisy Leslie, dimpled and smiling, was now coming toward them, holding fast to the gloved hand of a portly, fair, good-natured matron, also smiling, and attired in lavender moire and point lace.

"Good evening, Mr. Wilsey," said the lady, who had met him once before at a school reception. "This impulsive little girl of mine has been dragging me hither and yon in search of the valedictorian of the evening."

"O, Mr. Wilsey, you will say 'yes,' will you not? It's just the loveliest plan!"

"Miss Daisy's request may be impossible to grant, but Miss Daisy herself is irresistible and defies impossibilities. So speak, little hummingbird, if it be to the half of my kingdom."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilsey," replied Daisy. "Well, we girls—and by 'we' I mean just 'us four and no more'—have talked over a plan for going down on the Jersey coast together for a few days this summer. Serene Dudley proposed it, but her mother has to go somewhere else—sick relative or something—and Mamma Leslie is just delighted to take her place."

"No, Daisy," declared Mrs. Leslie, "I have said nothing of the kind. I only heard of this matter a quarter of an hour ago."

"But you're perfectly willing," said Daisy. "You know we're just worn to skeletons with those dreadful French verbs and essays and things!"

Daisy had finally sung "The Maid of Dundee" as her part in the exercises.

"Yes, you look like a much-wilted little Daisy," said Mrs. Leslie, fondly patting the round rosy cheek, "and I believe a few whiffs of sea air will do you good."

"Can Edyth go, Mr. Wilsey?" asked Daisy.

"I must say that the plan fits very nicely into my own arrangements," replied he. "I was just wondering what to do with my daughter while

I take a run out to the wild West early in next month."

"I will be very happy with Mrs. Leslie and the girls, father," said Edyth.

"Then we will consider it settled," said he. "But what place will it be?"

"Asbury Park," said Daisy.

"Why not the Branch?" said Mr. Wilsey.

"Too dressed up," answered Daisy. "We'll have enough of such places later."

"Well, I will run down to Asbury Park tomorrow and see about rooms and board, if you are sure that the arrangement is agreeable to the other young ladies."

"O, yes, Mr. Wilsey," said Daisy. "We were talking with them just before we came to find you. Come, mamma, I want you to meet Professor Grunwald's new wife, *die kleine Professorin*."

They turned away, and Mr. Wilsey and Edyth followed them into the seminary. Edyth's attention was immediately claimed by several young people in the drawing-room. Mr. Wilsey engaged in conversation with Mr. Dupont, with whom he had a slight acquaintance.

It was not Mr. Wilsey's policy to allow any one to know much about himself. He had long since severed his relations with the business house with which he was connected at the time of his marriage. Mr. Dupont was a society man, a confirmed bachelor of enough property to support him in elegant idleness, and a veteran adviser to hostesses as to new and pleasing modes of dispensing hospitality. His practiced eye had observed the Wilseys as probable applicants for social honors, and his curiosity was stimulated in regard to them, while his good nature prompted him to assist so beautiful a girl as Edyth to the success of which he felt sure she was worthy. Moreover, there was nothing lent so much amusement to his somewhat *blasé* existence as to watch the struggle of new people to gain a foothold on the sacred summit of social preferment, a height held and intrenched by a few old families of ancient traditions, good breeding, but not unlimited wealth. Mr. Wilsey informed Mr. Dupont with dignity, in response to inquiry, that he expected to become a permanent resident of New York in the early autumn, and that he was already negotiating for

a new house then being erected on Central Park West.

On a divan just opposite the two men Mrs. Van Ross, the wife of an elderly retired banker, and her niece, Miss Corwin, daughter of a judge of high renown, were conversing together.

"I do not think the seminary is as exclusive as it used to be when you were here, Cordelia," Mrs. Van Ross was saying in her low, cold tone. "It is a great pity that wealth and not blood is coming to be the passport into American society. Among the few things that money should not be able to buy is the *entrée* into high life."

"But, Aunt Dorothea," said Miss Corwin, "if people are well-bred they are not at all obnoxious, even if they cannot display a pedigree dating back to William of Orange. I am sure that all these young ladies appear well. That Miss Wilsey is exceptionally attractive."

"A girl who probably does not know the maiden name of either great-grandmother. I have heard that her father was once an actor, third-rate, of course, and that he became sud-

denly rich, and that not by inheritance. There are whispers of an occasional sojourn at Monte Carlo. At any rate, he is often abroad."

"Well," said Miss Corwin, who had imbibed some of the hopelessly democratic ideas of her day and generation, "he has a fine presence and shows the polish of foreign travel, and I do not see why the charming daughter should be repressed because of the father's dubious reputation."

"But, my dear Cordelia," said Mrs. Van Ross, with a flash from her steel-blue eyes that almost seemed to light up the remarkable nose that she was proud to have inherited from a Dutch admiral, "unless some of the best families set themselves against this rush of people who are continually springing up from nothing society will be completely undermined. I shall not countenance these Wilseys."

Just at this point Mr. Dupont approached in his suavest manner, but with secret merriment, and asked if he might present Mr. Wilsey, the father of the valedictorian.

Mr. Wilsey divined the question, and caught the involuntary glance of disapproval darted in

his direction by the elder lady. He perceived that she refused an introduction, and his dark face grew darker as he turned and made his way out again to the piazza.

Mr. Dupont, not at all nonplused, immediately changed the subject and inquired:

"Where's Kylmer to-night?"

"We simply could not persuade him to come, and I suppose the dear boy is with his cousin, Gretchen von Roosbeck."

Mr. Dupont flashed a look at Miss Corwin, whose eyes danced with fun behind, just above her satin fan. He maintained a serious countenance, although with difficulty, for everyone knew that Mrs. Van Ross had set her heart on the alliance of her only son and heir with the plain and ponderous Miss Gretchen, whose only attractiveness lay in substantial property and her irreproachable descent. Everyone also knew that Kylmer Van Ross did not speed his wooing, and that his mother's air castles were destined to vanish into their original ether.

Mrs. Van Ross was the real arbiter of the innermost circle of New York society, though beloved by few. Dupont would like no better

amusement than to see her thoroughly routed, even while he posed as her man Friday. Not being weighted with conscientious scruples, he conceived the idea of causing Edyth Wilsey to arise on Kylmer's horizon, and so introduce a little drama with no end of interesting situations to an onlooker like himself.

The next morning Edyth said farewell to teachers and school friends and joined her father in the city. He had taken apartments at the Windsor, and ordered luncheon sent up to the luxurious little parlor. While Edyth dallied with her strawberry ice and cake Mr. Wilsey pushed back his chair and regarded her critically. His soul grew bitter at the thought that this lovely girl, who could adorn any circle, must be made to feel her lack of aristocratic antecedents.

"She shall not lack admission to even the Van Ross mansion," he said to himself, "even if it takes all my wealth to accomplish it!"

After the remains of the luncheon had been removed, he said, with unusual kindness, but gravely:

"Edyth, there are some things I wish to say

to you. You and I must understand each other. I have given you brilliant advantages, and my only desire is that you shall achieve a great social success. Unfortunately, your mother's family and my own, while entirely respectable, were not of the class to transmit to you pride of birth, and you will be made to feel that fact by some who will flaunt a pedigree in your face. My plan for you is to place you by marriage on a secure footing socially. What I ask of you is implicit obedience to my directions. As I told you last night, I wish no straight-laced notions. What have you to say, Edyth?"

He spoke the name with a tenderness he had never before manifested, and the tone went right to the heart of the lonely girl.

"Perhaps," she thought, "after all, he will be more loving now," and the idea gave her such a thrill of happiness, that she cared little for all that he had said, except that he desired her to be happy, and would try to make her so. He was offering her a cluster of roses with many hidden thorns. Soon the roses would fade, and only the thorns remain in the soft young hands.

But she saw only the blossoms, and replied to his question:

"I do not think you will make it difficult to obey you, sir."

He then sent her to her room to rest for a few hours.

"There are some new novels on the table, if you care to read," he said, as she moved toward the door. "At half-past four we will drive in the park."

Edyth stepped back and kissed him on the forehead and left him, pausing on her way to pick up a bit of trash by "The Duchess." Having reached her room, she donned a cool white wrapper, and, book in hand, dropped into an easy chair, but not to read. Everything was changed. The careless schooldays were over at last. Her feet pressed the shore of a new world. She felt strange and lonely in spite of her father's plans for her ease and pleasure. The ever-present longing for a mother's love and companionship asserted itself with fresh power in her soul. Laurance Wilsey was not a man who would have cared for his child had she been born a cripple or blind. He was intensely

selfish, and prized her, not for the sweetness she could bring into his life, but as the instrument of advancing his worldly ambitions.

At four o'clock Edyth presented herself in the parlor. Her father scrutinized her closely. She looked exquisitely lovely in her delicate blue gown and white plumed hat. He handed her a large cluster of marguerites, which she fastened in her belt. Then they descended together to the entrance, where a victoria and a pair of spirited bays awaited them. All of fashionable New York had not yet fled to the mountains or shore, for there had been a lingering spring, and the hot weather had only just set in. All over the city there were women toiling in crowded, sweltering attics for a morsel of bread, women who must continue to toil all summer in hunger and pain; but in the park, women from cool, opulent homes, reclining on satin cushions, rode by the fresh green acres, enjoying the light breeze, and congratulated themselves on a speedy escape from the unbearable discomforts of the town in warm weather.

Mr. Wilsey was swift to perceive that many an eye flashed with interest as Edyth's fair,

sweet face was seen, and men and women turned questionably toward each other as they passed the Wilseys' carriage. Two young men in a light wagon had paused near the obelisk, and were engaged in a friendly difference concerning some fact in its long history, the result of which was to settle a wager made at the club the night before. One of them suddenly broke off his sentence, and said in a low, hurried tone to the other:

"Quick, Dort! There's a picture!"

It was Kylmer Van Ross that spoke, and even as the words left his lips the Wilseys had gone by.

"Quite divinely fair!" exclaimed his companion. "Who is she, Van?"

"A Fra Angelico angel!" replied he, looking after the retiring wheels.

"No, a Del Sarto madonna," declared Dort Harribee, "more human than an angel, but just as beautiful. But to return to the obelisk—"

"Confound the obelisk!" retorted Kylmer Van Ross. "That's a face you see but once in a lifetime. The man is Laurance Wilsey.

Nobody knows much about him, and the girl must be his daughter, just brought out from some Canadian school for naiads."

Kylmer so far forgot himself as to give his pet gray mare a sharp little cut with the whip, which she resented in so spirited a manner that conversation came to an end for the time being, and the light vehicle fairly flew along the road.

Laurance Wilsey knew Kylmer Van Ross by sight, and did not miss the start of surprise with which that scion of an ancient family observed the unconscious Edyth. The attitude of Mrs. Van Ross the night previous rankled sorely in his mind, and now he smiled grimly as the victoria rolled on.

That evening he took his daughter to the theater. A certain play had been so immensely popular during the spring season that it had run on into the summer. The Wilseys had a box to themselves. Edyth shrank from view in the shelter of the hangings, but her father's striking face was clearly outlined against the white and gold background.

"She's there, Van, she's there!" said Dort

Harribee *sotto voce*, laying down his opera glasses. "You can't see anything but a pair of pearl gloves, a white fan, and an occasional glimpse of a small nose."

Kylmer Van Ross caught up the glasses, and looked long in the direction indicated by his friend, but with no further results.

"What have you found, fellows, that is at all new or striking?" yawned Robert Annesley, who was one of the party. "I know this play by heart."

"Why, Van was quite struck by a pretty face in the park this afternoon. It belongs, we think, to a Miss Wilsey."

"Whew!" said Annesley, softly. "I hardly dare to state my own good fortune in that direction."

"What do you mean?" said Kylmer, sharply, turning on him suddenly.

"Only this. My sister is one of the alumnæ of Mrs. Knight's seminary, and to please her I attended as her escort the commencement exercises last night. This Miss Wilsey read a valedictory that would have melted Prince Bismarck himself. Such affairs generally make a man

wish that he was born in China, but this was really an exception. I was introduced to Miss Wilsey, and danced with her. She is uncommonly pretty, and they say that Papa Wilsey's ducats are no trifle. If it weren't for Marjorie I'd go in and win."

"Come, now, Bob Annesley, just stir yourself a little between the acts, won't you, and see what you can do for an old friend. But here comes Dupont, late as usual, from his everlasting dinner at Madam So-and-So's. Heigho, Ponty, we're discussing the Wilseys—new people."

"Yes, that girl is destined to cut a wide swath in town next season," said Dupont. "Saw her last night at Knight's school."

"Well, now, old chap," said Van Ross, "if you and Bob don't smuggle me into that box before nine-thirty you shall never have another whiff of my Havanas."

Thus it was that when the curtain fell on the second act Dupont and Annesley made their way to the box occupied by the Wilseys, and after chatting a while asked permission to present a couple of friends. Mr. Wilsey assented,

and the two young men were accordingly brought over and presented, and were received graciously. When the play was done, and Edyth had returned with her father to the hotel, she felt that it was certainly pleasant to be young and rich and at least not very ugly in one's appearance. Also it was gratifying to her to note the look of satisfaction on her father's usually noncommittal face.

Kylmer Van Ross lay awake for some hours that night. This son of an exclusive mother had not proved so far in his record to be a credit to his race. Society blinks at many defects in the life of a young man who is well-born and wealthy, and Mrs. Van Ross was totally blind to any glimpse of wrong in her son. But Kylmer was woefully in debt just now for horses, wines, and other luxuries, and he had a strong aversion to an appeal to his father, as the last time that the elder Van Ross had set his son on his feet financially it had been with a scathing broadside of rebuke, and a threat to leave him to his own destruction in the future. Kylmer did not share his mother's reverence for pedigree, neither did he enter into her project

for an alliance with his cousin, whom he cordially hated; but it had begun to seem to him that to marry her was the only way out of his monetary difficulties. Edyth Wilsey had appeared on the scene in the nick of time, and her soft, girlish loveliness and agreeable manners pleased him, and her father's gold glinted in his dreams all night. As for Laurance Wilsey, he saw the impression that had been made on Van Ross at the theater. He knew the character of the man, but that was a secondary consideration, or even less. He believed there was nothing that money could not do, and he was willing to barter his child's future happiness for a gallery of genuine old portraits, and a yellow parchment with a list of great names.

CHAPTER V

Mr. Wilsey had been to Colorado and back, and Edyth had remained with the Leslies at their country house near Tarrytown, for the Asbury Park trip had been postponed until August on account of the serious illness of Serene Dudley. The first of July found the Wilseys registered at the United States Hotel in Saratoga. Edyth had not the shallow nature that could long be content with a butterfly existence, but for the present she enjoyed her wardrobe of fresh, dainty gowns and hats, the long, lovely drives to the lake and through the beautiful country, the morning dallying at the springs, the orchestra concerts on the piazzas, the fireworks in the park, and the garden parties. She had been there but one week when she came face to face on the piazza one evening with Kylmer Van Ross. His mother sat by and saw the meeting, but even she could find no fault with the appearance or demeanor of the fair girl who looked like a lily in her silvery draperies and pure pearls, and carried herself

like a princess. There was a perceptible thawing of the frigid heart beneath that haughty exterior. Kylmer Van Ross was incapable of a noble, genuine affection for anyone. He loved himself too devotedly to receive the expulsive power of a new affection. He had no comprehension of love in its unselfishness and sacredness; but he had a faculty of saying pretty things, and of rendering delicate attentions. He had a good deal of general information and a ready wit, and could make himself very companionable when he had his own advantage in view. He had not been long in Saratoga before he made Edyth believe that he loved her with the one love of his life. He fancied her, it is true; he liked to be with her; he lavished money on her that rightfully belonged to his tailor. Edyth looked naturally to her father for advice, and he encouraged the acquaintance, keeping himself a good deal in the background. Edyth did not know that he was inwardly exulting over the downfall of the maternal Van Ross, who at first raged in her own apartments, then lapsed into an injured silence, but finally consented to have the girl without a great-

grandmother introduced to her, and at last invited Edyth to a seat in her carriage. Mr. Van Ross had just lost very heavily in some Western enterprise. Perhaps she could not afford to maintain her inflexible attitude toward a girl whose father was negotiating for a palatial mansion overlooking Central Park, "for dear Kylmer has expensive tastes."

If Edyth had been a little older, with a better knowledge of herself and of human nature, she would not have cared at all for Kylmer Van Ross. But inexperienced as she was, affectionate, and with confidence in her father's judgment, she gave to her lover a wealth of sincere devotion and tender appreciation that was as if one had returned a handful of bonbons with the Kohinoor itself. Edyth was haunted by no more grave wonderings during these glittering days. She had no thought but for Kylmer. Life was a dream of splendor and sweetness. Laurance Wilsey was silently triumphant, Mrs. Van Ross resigned, and her son radiant with self-satisfaction. The fifth of August came a letter from Eleanor Lee, who was now visiting the Leslies on the Hudson.

"Now that Serene is quite well," she wrote, "we must have our little stay at the seashore. I know you must be having a perfectly gorgeous time, but do tear yourself away for a week or two, for the sake of the dear old days that are gone forever. Don't bring any French flummery. A blue serge, one wash dress, and a white wool for evenings complete my list."

"What's the use of this jaunt, Edyth?" inquired Kylmer. "Aren't you contented here with me?"

"Measurably so," replied Edyth, laughing, "but I must not disappoint the girls."

"Can a fellow run down to that barbarous Jersey coast during the carrying out of this brilliant scheme?"

"Certainly not," she replied, teasingly, "for this is an auld lang syne affair, and you are only a modern innovation."

"But I shall surely come," he said.

Mr. Wilsey accompanied Edyth to Tarrytown, where motherly Mrs. Leslie and a merry trio of girls joined them. They lunched together in New York, and took an early afternoon train from Jersey City. Many a passenger smiled out

of pure sympathy with the bright faces of the younger portion of the party. It was so evident that they were off for a grand good time.

"Here you are!" shouted the stage drivers, standing in line at the Asbury Park station.

"This way for the West End!"

"This way for the Coleman!"

"Here you be for the Ocean Hotel!" screamed a third.

But our travelers had not come for a hotel life, and Mr. Wilsey, at the earnest solicitations of the girls, had engaged board at a private house overlooking the surf. They were soon on their way in the lumbering omnibus, passing picturesque little cottages, and getting an occasional glimpse of Wesley Lake, lined with pretty summer homes, and dotted with rowboats bright with scarlet cushions and gay, striped awnings. A strong breeze swept up from the sea.

"It is an elixir!" cried Serene, her white cheeks already taking on a tinge of pink.

"Is that the same village on the other side of the lake?" asked Edyth.

"No, dear," said Eleanor Lee. "That is

Ocean Grove, an awfully stupid place where they have Methodist meetings night and day, and fine you ten cents every time you smile on Sunday. It's as different as can be over here. I've heard Charlotte Mills tell all about it."

The stage rattled along down one broad avenue to the shore, then turned and proceeded two or three blocks, and finally stopped at the entrance of a large cottage, whose numerous balconies and piazzas suggested delightful chats and promenades and bits of reading in full view of the glorious ocean.

"It seems rather primitive," remarked Mrs. Leslie, somewhat dubiously surveying the pine walls, straw matting, and painted blue furniture of the room that had been assigned to her.

"O, mamma, this is just what we want. It's a dry way of camping out, you know."

Mrs. Leslie smothered a sigh, and tried to content herself by a glance at the magnificent expanse of sea and sky and the long lines of foaming breakers, but congratulated herself secretly that there are only seven days in one week. A ripple of laughter from the next room, which the four girls had insisted on occupying

together, did more to reconcile her kind heart than anything else. Mr. Wilsey left that evening. He had business in Boston and Montreal, and would return in time to escort the party back to town. He was in a most amiable mood, for his plans were working to his perfect satisfaction. The girls spent the evening on the lake, gayly imagining that the pretty but commonplace body of water was the Grand Canal, that the rowboat was a veritable gondola, and that they were ladies of high rank with long, melodious names. The next morning they donned their serge dresses and broad-brimmed hats, bought each a wooden pail and a shovel, invested in a joint bag of caramels and maccaroons, and betook themselves to the beach with two large umbrellas, several shawls and the last Harper's. They scorned the pavilions crowded with dainty lawns and embroideries, and wandered far up the plank walk where pedestrians are few. Each damsel having provided for herself a most comfortable shawl-lined sleepy hollow in the white sea sand by means of diligent shoveling, the umbrellas were firmly planted, and the four friends proceeded to

enjoy the serenity of the morning and the waves lapping lazily on the shore, while Eleanor read aloud a short story by a favorite writer.

"This is happiness!" exclaimed Serene, idly aiming a white pebble at a bunch of seaweed and hitting Edyth, who sat in exactly the opposite direction. "Please don't anyone propose to do anything else, so as to suggest that there is ever going to be any end to this."

"Just see what beautiful lace each wave leaves on the shore!" said Edyth.

Edyth had not confided to her father the fact of her recent engagement to Kylmer Van Ross, neither had she yet ventured to put on the brilliant solitaire he had given her. But she smiled with a happy consciousness of her secret. There was probably even now a letter for her in the morning mail, her first love-letter.

"Shall you cross the ocean this autumn, Serene?" asked Eleanor.

"I hope so," she replied, "and yet I have such a dread of being out at sea. I would not draw one easy breath until the ship entered the harbor."

"The ocean looks peaceful enough this morn-

ing," said Edyth, dreamily watching the sunlight flash on the gently swelling waves.

"Yes, but contrast this with a black midnight, a raging tempest, a foundering ship!" declaimed Eleanor, in her most tragic style.

"Don't talk of such things, please, girls," pleaded little Daisy, with a shudder. "It makes the sunlight dim. I'm so afraid to die."

"So am I," said Serene, "and yet I sometimes wonder why I need to be afraid. If there is a heaven it is much more beautiful than this world, and I would think anyone might be glad to go there."

"It's a foreign land to most people," said Eleanor.

"But mother had an aunt once, a lovely old lady, who used to call it 'home.' It is never hard nor strange to go home, girls!"

Edyth had changed her position and had closed her eyes. Into the indolent brightness of the summer morning a shadow had crept. But what had she to do with shadows? She would take her life as it came to her, fresh, radiant, dazzling with love and pleasure. She turned merrily to her mates and said:

"Who is it *now* that has the blues! Those matters troubled me a little that last term at the seminary, but I have cast them to the four winds. Let us talk only of what is agreeable. I will tell you of a garden party at the Grand Union."

Thus the time passed until the noon dinner hour, when the four maidens gathered up their belongings and started for the cottage. On the way they met a slight acquaintance of Edyth's, petite, effusive Mrs. Leroy, who paused to chat with her a few moments while the other girls passed on.

"O, my dear Miss Wilsey," she exclaimed, "I am so happy to see you. When did you come, and where are you stopping?"

Edyth having indicated the cottage, which was near by, the lady continued:

"Why, we are almost neighbors, aren't we? I am at the Coleman, and just the forlornest of mortals. My physician ordered me here instead of to the Branch—said it would be quieter for my nerves; for you know I still have those terrible attacks with my head. But I am nearly dying of ennui. My husband is only here from

Saturday night until Monday morning. I wish you would come and spend a day with me; will you not?"

"Thank you," replied Edyth, "I hardly think I can desert the girls for so long a time, but I will come and call on you some afternoon."

Edyth spoke with a sinking heart, for she was not fond of the nervous, vapid little woman, and bade her good morning as soon as possible. When she reached the cottage the three girls sat with dolorous faces on the veranda.

"I did hope we wouldn't meet a person down here that any of us knew!" sighed Eleanor.

"I'm sorry, girls," said Edyth, "but I shall have to devote a little time to this lady. I met her two years ago at Saratoga, and she has always called on me when I have been in the city, and has taken me out quite a number of times. Has the mail come?"

Just then Mrs. Leslie, who was sitting near, tapped her knitting bag significantly. There was a rush for the article in question, and Serene, having obtained possession of it, fled up the outside stairway to the upper piazza, and thence to the room, followed by the others

in full chase. Mrs. Knight would hardly have recognized her decorous young ladies in the flushed and breathless quartette, who dropped all upon one bed, each grasping a precious epistle. Edyth slipped her letter into her pocket unobserved, and proceeded to make a simple toilet for dinner. It was delightful to defer the pleasure that she knew was positively in store for her. It was her very first real letter from Kylmer, and she could not read it until she might be alone. After dinner, when the other girls were taking a siesta, she slipped quietly out, and down the street to the lakeside, following the narrow walk until she came to a little grove of pines and scrub oaks where stood a summer house that she had observed the evening before. The arbor was vacant at this hour, and she sat down upon a rustic bench and drew the letter from its hiding-place, toying a while with the envelope before she ventured to enjoy its contents. It was not a remarkable letter, and lacked the ring of true, noble manhood; but to the trusting girl her lover was a Leander, a Bayard, a King Arthur all in one, and his wordy and shallow protestations were

an ambrosial feast to her heart. It was blessed to be alive! The afternoon was very warm and still. There were few people stirring. Edyth was not quite ready to return to the cottage, for it was delicious to dream alone. The group of juvenile boatmen, napping or idly comparing notes on the season's business, became suddenly alert and clamorous as she approached. A patron at this hour was as rare as an unpatronized boat three hours later.

"Row you across, ma'am?" shouted one eager voice.

"This way, miss!" cried several at once, wildly gesticulating.

"What is the name of your boat," said Edyth, turning to a less boisterous applicant who stood hat in hand, and seemed to consider her to be in possession of her hearing.

"*Elaine*," replied the youth, in as matter-of-fact a tone as he would have said "Mary Smith."

Edyth thought of "the lily maid of Astolat," and the story of unrequited love, and her own happy lot shone more resplendent in her eyes.

"I like the name," said she. "I'll take your boat for half an hour."

She followed the owner of the little boat, who at that moment could not have been prouder were he the captain of a Cunarder. With a growing boy's consciousness of his own awkwardness, he handed his one fair passenger to the wide crimson-cushioned seat in the stern, and took his place at the oars, one grasp of which set him entirely at his ease.

"How did you come to name your boat *Elaine?*" asked Edyth.

"Wal, you see, miss, it was last season when she was built, an' we hed a summer boarder, an' she was so sorter nice an' 'bligin' thet mar sed I'd better let her name the boat. So she called her *Elaine*, an' then she told us the story of how Elaine thought an' orful lot of a—a—a—well, some sort uv a soldier—"

"A knight?" suggested Edyth.

"Yes'm, thet's jest who it was. P'r'aps you heard about it in the time uv it? No? Wal, at any rate he didn't care a pebble for her, and finely she run down an' died, an' before she died she made her folks promise to put her on a boat after she was dead, an' to let a dumb man thet worked on her father's farm row her

on the river to the place where the man lived thet she thought sech a sight uv. Mar sed thet she hedn't much uv a 'pinion uv a young gal thet would die fer a feller thet didn't want her; an' she'd better hev took kayneen an' helped her mar with the washin'. We didn't think no luck would come uv namin' a boat arter sech a story, but we didn't wanter hurt our boarder's feelin's, an' so I got Jim Brockett to paint it *Elaine,* an' fer all I see my luck's been pretty fair."

Edyth shuddered at this massacre of one of Tennyson's loveliest poems, and felt that the captain's silence would be more agreeable than any further exercise of his conversational powers. Leaning back comfortably, she closed her eyes and listened to the even plashing of the oars, too happy to doze and so lose for one moment the realization of her perfect content. Was there ever such a lover as Kylmer? Was ever a maiden so fortunate as herself? The sound of other oars and other voices broke upon the warm, golden stillness of the afternoon. A boat rowed by two young ladies was approaching, and as they drew near the *Elaine,* Edyth

heard them say to a third bright-faced girl in the stern:

"Sorry that you missed the meeting this morning, Dora."

"Yes," she replied, "I can't bear to lose one of them, but you know I am boarding a long way from the Temple, and nine o'clock is rather early even in summer time."

"Early! Not at Ocean Grove. It's quite the thing to see the sun rise out of the ocean. Blanche and I had a lovely half hour on the beach before breakfast this very day. We tried to think of all the Bible verses we know about the sea."

Then as if by common consent the three voices joined in Faber's hymn:

> "There's a wideness in God's mercy,
> Like the wideness of the sea."

Edyth listened as the music died away. It seemed to her that these girls had been speaking a language that she did not know, and yet it touched her heart strangely. She spoke to her little oarsman and said:

"What did those young ladies mean by the Temple, please?"

"The Temple's a big buildin' right over there," he replied, pointing with one bare elbow, "an' the young folks has a meetin' there every mornin'."

"Can anybody go?" queried Edyth.

"Yes, marm. Our summer boarder allus went."

Edyth felt no little curiosity to visit a place that seemed to have such attraction for girls no older than herself. The next morning, as the four friends emerged rosy and hungry from an early dip in the surf, Edyth proposed that after breakfast they should take a stroll to the queer Methodist settlement across the lake, going by way of the beach, for the bridges that now give so much convenience were not at that time built. The girls were ready for any novelty, and started off in high spirits. Serene insisted on stopping at the first pavilion long enough to make a sketch, and it was after nine o'clock when the girls reached Ocean Pathway.

"O, what a perfectly beautiful promenade!" exclaimed Daisy. "I wonder where it leads."

"That is easy enough to determine," replied Eleanor, as they all turned and entered upon the

spacious and beautiful avenue from the ocean to the grove.

"Look, girls!" said Edyth, after they had gone on in silence for a few moments, "at that large semicircular building over there with people standing outside. Let's go and see what is afoot."

"O, some prayer meeting probably," said Eleanor, with a toss of her head.

As they drew nearer they heard the sound of a grand chorus, rich and sweet, and as inspiring as martial music. They involuntarily hastened their steps and made their way to one of the entrances. There was a break in the crowd just then, and as it closed again they were drawn just inside of the edifice. They had never beheld such a sight before. More than a thousand people, many of them under twenty-five years of age, were engaging heartily in a religious service. The music gathered strength and tenderness. Everybody sang:

"Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee,
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I can see,
The Light of the world is Jesus."

The leader of the meeting opened his Bible and read the first chapter of St. John's gospel. Then he spoke a few clear, concise, pointed words from a heart full of love for souls. As he closed he said:

"Some of you are walking in the light of youth, of beauty, of health, of talent, of human love, of worldly pleasure, of wealth this morning, but these lights, sparkling and pleasant though they be, when compared with that Light of which I have just read, are but as feeble tapers to the king of day. Some of them must flicker and fail in the swift rush of the years; all of them will be blown out by one gust from the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and you will be left in darkness, eternal darkness! But you who have opened your hearts to the Sun of Righteousness will find in him no darkness at all, for the path shineth more and more unto the perfect day. If you follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is as the morning. O, dear ones who have not accepted Christ, come, come to-day. Safe with him, you need not fear the darkness of sorrow or pain or temptation that falls upon every lot,

but like the children of Israel, when all Egypt lay under a pall of thickest gloom, you shall have light in your dwellings, and even the night shall be light about you. Now let us all sing that chorus once more."

With his own powerful tenor voice he led the singing:

"Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee."

The girls did not look at each other. Edyth's face was deeply serious, Eleanor's scornful, Serene's tearful, and Daisy's half-frightened, half-perplexed.

"Now let us have twenty-five short testimonies!" called the leader.

Quickly one after the other from all parts of the house came brief, bright, loving sentences of praise, bits of Christian experience, verses of Scripture, lines of hymns, and interspersed with all of these that wonderful choral music. Edyth's mind went back to the Easter verse that she had almost forgotten:

"That they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again."

It was of him that these young people were speaking and singing. Not as of a hard, exacting Master, but as of one beloved beyond all joy. But the evil, selfish spirit within her cried, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God!"

Her life was full of worldly light, just such as the young preacher had described, but very goodly and pleasant for all that. She wanted no better. She had her lover, her youth, her health, her money. They were enough. A bitter feeling of rebellion arose in her soul. She disliked these people and their talk and noise. She would get away from them all.

"Are you not tired?" she whispered to her friends, "*I* am."

If she had said "troubled" the low affirmatives in reply would have been nearer the truth. They were soon retracing their steps along Ocean Pathway.

"I'm glad to get out in the air," said Daisy, with a sigh of relief. "It was so warm and—and queer in there!"

"What happy faces!" said Serene, musingly. "I think it's dreadful for people to make so

free with religion!" exclaimed Eleanor. "Why, they talk of Jesus Christ as if they knew him!"

"The singing was rather fascinating," said Edyth, lightly. Not artistic, of course, but harmonious and in good time."

They sauntered along the plank walk and chatted of trivial things. A Sunday school "exertion" from some inland town was just pouring from the railroad station, filling the pavilions and crowding the plank walk with hundreds of pleasure-seekers. Weary-looking mothers, who had risen before the dawn, prepared hasty breakfasts, washed eager little faces, and buttoned small jackets and shoes; shopgirls in pink or blue nuns' veilings or elaborate white lawns, escorted by youths with canes and cigarettes; small boys with pockets bulging with peanuts, and brains in a ferment with plans for forts and wells and unlimited wading; crying babies, sleeping babies, smiling babies, solemn babies in arms and in perambulators; fathers of families leaning sidewise with the weight of well-filled baskets, and wiping their heated brows; solitary women in dark spectacles and green veils carrying paper boxes of luncheon

and volumes of "Favorite Poems;" little girls with big sashes and new shoes who looked disconsolately at the near but distant water—all these had charged upon Ocean Grove in one vast army and had taken possession of the coast from Ross's to Lillagore's. Our four young friends after a little quiet study of human nature walked slowly back to their boarding place.

"I am glad that we decided on this afternoon for our drive to Sea Girt," said Eleanor, "the weather is so fine."

When they reached the cottage a note was found awaiting Miss Wilsey. She read it with a slightly clouded face, and then re-read it aloud to the girls:

"My Dear Friend: I am suffering with one of my attacks of neuralgia, and am very lonely. My new maid, who came yesterday, is about as dexterous and intelligent as a post. Is it too much to ask your company a little while this afternoon?

"Your devoted but afflicted
"Marie Clinton Leroy."

"Of course I cannot refuse," said Edyth, "but you must take your drive just the same."

After much demurring the girls yielded. Edyth wrote a brief note of consent to Mrs. Leroy, and sent it over to the hotel. The dinner was a merry one, and the usual siesta was preceded by a frolic.

"I will omit my nap to-day," said Edyth, "for I think I ought not to keep that poor little woman waiting for me."

"We must plan out next summer's outing with special reference to regions unknown to the Leroys," said Serene.

Edyth completed her toilet, and bade a somewhat reluctant good-bye to the girls. She stood a moment in the half-open door.

"Farewell, sweet Sister of Mercy!" said Eleanor.

"Don't forget us in your round of gayety this afternoon!" called Daisy.

Still Edyth lingered. Was it the sunny-faced angel of her gay, girlish days that held her those few moments in his arms ere he too should say "good-bye" forever? For just outside of the threshold waited the Angel of Pain,

with a face of holier but veiled brightness, waited to take her hand and lead her into the shadow, for it is only there that some natures will seek and find their Lord.

Edyth found Mrs. Leroy nervous and expectant, her thin features flushed with fever, her hair disordered, the room strewn with clothing, and the new maid, stolid and open-mouthed, looking on. Edyth persuaded Mrs. Leroy to be assisted to the lounge, while she helped the impassive Joanna to make the bed and beat up the hot, crumpled pillows.

Then she bathed the invalid's face and hands, brushed her fair hair soothingly and braided it in a smooth, firm braid, and helped her back to bed. In a short time the room was in perfect order, the few flies driven out, the blinds drawn down evenly, and the slats in the shutters opened enough to admit the cool sea breeze.

Edyth rang for a bowl of cracked ice, and placed it on a stand that she had covered with a fresh white towel.

"Now don't you feel that you can sleep a little?" she asked, noting the relief that was already visible in the face of her patient.

"Do you mind reading to me a while? You will find something there on the table."

Edyth took up a copy of Longfellow, and selected "Evangeline" because of the cradle-like movement of the hexameter. Mrs. Leroy's eyelids soon drooped restfully. Edyth read on softly. Joanna nodded over her crocheting. By and by there was some stir and confusion and hurrying of feet at the hotel entrance, and Edyth knew that a train was in from New York, and that the 'bus had brought visitors. Her patient was now fast asleep.

There were people on the stairs. Their steps came nearer and nearer. Edyth remembered casually, as she leaned back in the low rocker and closed her eyes, that the large room next to Mrs. Leroy's was wide open when she came by, and in that painful state of order that betokens expected guests at a summer hotel, and a maid was filling the water pitchers.

"These persons are surely coming to occupy that room," thought Edyth, "and O, I do hope they will be quiet."

The newcomers were two young men. They were complaining about the heat of the after-

noon. Edyth started as she heard a very familiar voice say:

"This place lies on the equator, and no mistake."

"My kingdom for a dry collar!" remarked the other.

The heavy shuffling tread of the porter, laden with two portmanteaus, followed the impatient steps of the visitors. Edyth heard the jingle of silver coins as the porter was dismissed with the good-natured advice to "buy a ticket to the north pole."

Then the door closed and deadened the hum of the two voices and the occasional laughter. The two friends seemed in excellent spirits, and, having rung for a bottle of champagne, they waxed yet more social as an hour passed by.

Meanwhile Mrs. Leroy slept heavily, and Edyth sat beside her. She knew that Kylmer Van Ross had come to surprise her, and her lovely face grew now grave, now merry, and flushed and paled with the thoughts that flitted through her brain. She moved the chair nearer to the window for more air. Just then an outside door of the next room was flung open, and

Kylmer Van Ross with his friend, Morely Sandford, stepped out upon the piazza, and took their places in two chairs nearly opposite to the window where Edyth was sitting. Each young man lighted a cigarette with rude disregard of the possible feelings of invisible guests near at hand, and made himself quite comfortable with his heels elevated to the rail of the piazza.

"Quite a breeze, after all!" said Sandford.

Van Ross looked at the time, glancing as he did so at a dainty little miniature in the back of his watch.

"So you've never seen her?" he said to Sandford.

"No, you lucky dog, I never have. Let us take a look at that photo, please."

Obeying a quick instinct of horror at being obliged to hear what was not intended for her ears, Edyth had arisen from her chair to retreat in the farther side of the room, but just then Mrs. Leroy stirred uneasily and moaned for ice, and the loud voices of the young men were painfully in evidence.

Kylmer detached the watch from its chain, and handed it to his companion.

"Not a very striking face, but sweet as a posy," said Sandford. "Quite a contrast to that soubrette in the Criterion company that you were raving about all last winter."

"Yes, *La Lira* had fifty times the *verve* of this little lady. This one isn't much more than a schoolgirl, you know, and takes everything in dead earnest. Awfully confiding and affectionate; will be tiresome after a while, I'm afraid. Still, a fellow can afford to be bored by a pretty girl with plenty of rocks behind her, for of course he need not exert himself to be attentive nor agreeable after the knot is tied; and a fellow whose governor is down on him, and whose credit is as low as mine, must make some sacrifices, you know. Her father is only too glad to buy our name for his daughter."

Kylmer replaced his watch, saying, as he did so:

"Poor little goose! She actually believes that there is such a thing as love in the world!"

"Kylmer Van Ross," exclaimed his companion, indignantly, "if you don't make that girl a good husband you ought to be put behind the bars!"

"Come, now, Morley. I'm not a domestic sort of chap, and you can't make me one. So suppose you suspend further effort."

In spite of herself Edyth had heard every word of this brief conversation. She did not faint under the blow, but her heart seemed to swell and almost stifle her. She had a strong desire to rush out and confront that smiling, nonchalant, traitorous lover of hers, and tell him how she despised him. But she sat still for another hour. The two men left for a stroll on the beach. Mrs. Leroy awoke. The pain had left her temples, and she thanked Edyth for her kind nursing.

After a few instructions to Joanna, Edyth excused herself and hurried back to the cottage. It was supper time, but she could not eat. She felt thankful that Mrs. Leslie and the girls had planned to take tea at Sea Girt, and would not be home until dusk. Edyth threw herself on the bed and wept, not for Kylmer Van Ross, but for the lost ideal of truth and love and manliness that he personified to her girlish soul. After a little she arose, bathed her eyes, and taking a shawl on her arm left the house. She

did not know where she was going, but she felt that she could not meet her friends nor chat with them just yet. On and on she walked, wrapped in her thoughts, not noticing any of the thronging faces on the promenade. She sat for a while on a bench overlooking the surf, until the horizon became dim in the twilight, and the sea was jeweled with the lights of passing ships. Then she arose and walked on, involuntarily turning at Ocean Pathway, and going toward the Grove. The Young People's Temple was being closed for the night. Edyth thought how she had stood there only that morning strong in her young life and love. It seemed years ago. Streams of people were now approaching the Auditorium—not the present vast structure, but the sanctuary without walls and with gray tree-trunks for pillars, where "Holiness to the Lord" was as yet unblazoned in electric lights. Then, as now, it shone out in an occasional face. A bell ceased tolling, and a large choir upon the platform began to sing. Edyth was surprised at the multitude that confronted the stand. She did not wish to join the congregation, but she walked along the out-

skirts of the crowd, and leaned against a tree to listen to the singing. Somebody prayed, but the words fell on her ear like the distant sound of waves. There was more singing, and then a man arose to speak to the people. He took a text, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again."

Edyth's attention was fixed. She moved forward and took a seat on the end of one of the settees. Simply and eloquently the preacher told the story of the life and death of Jesus Christ. It was a new revelation to Edyth Wilsey. It broke her heart. For the first time in her life she saw the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. She heard about the sin that laid the cross on the Innocent One. She felt that her sin was a part of the dreadful load that crushed him. He became to her a Reality worthy of all love and confidence. She saw now that true living meant to love him, and others for his sake, and that life was but an opportunity to grow like unto him.

The sermon was over. Some one was in-

viting those who wished to become Christians to go forward for prayers during the singing of the next hymn. The congregation arose and sang as one voice the plaintive, heart-stirring words, "Just as I am, without one plea." Edyth stood with tears streaming down her cheeks. Her whole soul cried out, "O Lamb of God, I come!" But she was alone and a stranger, and knew not where to go nor what to do.

"My child, can I help you?" said a low, sweet voice in her ear. There was an undertone of strength in the quiet words. Edyth turned and saw just such a face as would naturally belong to that voice, a face noble and womanly and radiant with unselfish love. She put her hand in that of the speaker.

"If you wish to go to the altar, I will go with you," whispered the latter, "but it will be exceedingly difficult to get there through the crowd. Perhaps we had better come this way."

She had been sitting nearly behind Edyth, and had watched the girl's face, and not the speaker, all through the sermon.

"I think I would like to go where it is quiet, and where there are fewer people," replied

Edyth, following her new friend, who immediately led the way beyond the bystanders and the inner circle of tents to another tent close by. The lady unfastened the door of the tent and ushered Edyth into the small canvas dwelling. It was divided by pretty draperies, thus making the front part into a cozy sitting-room. There was a neat matting on the floor. A lighted Japanese lantern hung from a pole overhead. The hostess offered Edyth a chair and sat down beside her.

"It seems like a dream," said Edyth, drawing her hand across her eyes. "I did not come out to-night to find Christ. I have been living a very gay life, and I came down to Asbury Park with some school friends for a frolic. To-day there was a terrible trouble suddenly came to me, and I wanted to get away from everyone that I knew, and I wandered over here and stopped to hear the music. I became interested in the sermon, and now I want to be a Christian, but I don't know how to 'come' to Christ. It's all so strange to me."

Edyth's friend opened a Bible that lay on the stand, and said:

"In the first place, dear, you haven't far to go, for listen: 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him.' Then you need not doubt your welcome, for he says, 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out."

"But I have been so selfish and sinful and thoughtless," said Edyth.

"Listen yet again, my child, to his word: 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' And hear this blessed verse in St. John's gospel: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

" 'Whosoever?' " said Edyth. "Please let me see it for myself."

She sat quietly for a few moments gazing on the text, God's brightest beacon to guide the storm-tossed into the harbor of peace.

"Why, I *do* believe," said Edyth, smiling through her tears.

"Then he saves you, dear. 'As many as touched him were made perfectly whole.' "

"O, he is here, right here!" said Edyth, in a whisper of mingled awe and joyous gratitude.

"Let us talk with him," said the older woman. They knelt together and mingled their prayers and happy tears. As they arose from their knees Edyth suddenly bethought herself of the hour, and glancing at her watch exclaimed:

"It is almost half-past nine, and I must hurry, for my friends will be anxious about me. You have been very kind to me, and I thank you more than I can tell. May I have your name?"

The lady took a card from her Bible and handed it to Edyth, who was looking in her pocketbook for one of her own. Having found it, Edyth gave it to her new friend, saying:

"I hope I may come again."

There was a cordial assent from the stranger, and it was scarcely spoken when Edyth had gone. Helen West, for it was she, turned toward the light and read the name engraved on the cardboard in her hand. She knew now why her heart had gone out so earnestly toward the beautiful girl. She understood why the delicate, lovely face had reminded her of the dear dead Eloise of the long ago. She neither cried out nor followed after her visitor. She

dropped on her knees beside the lounge, and with grateful amazement praised God. As for Edyth, she walked swiftly toward the ocean, pausing long enough at the Auditorium to hear the people singing:

"At the cross, at the cross, where I first saw the light
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day."

CHAPTER VI

As Edyth approached the cottage in Asbury Park she saw that the piazza was crowded. Daisy Leslie came down the steps to meet her.

"O, you naughty Edyth!" she said. "Mamma was beginning to get frantic about you. Where have you been so long?" Then in a lower tone, "There's a perfectly stunning man who has been here twice to inquire for you, and now—but there he comes again!"

Edyth grew sick at heart and faint as she saw Kylmer Van Ross advancing toward her. Daisy slipped from her arm just then, and Kylmer had reached her side.

"Good evening, Miss Wilsey!" said he, in his most polished manner, in response to the almost imperceptible bow that Edyth gave him. Edyth conquered the unsteadiness of her nerves, and replied courteously but coolly, leading the way toward the parlor, nearly empty of guests.

"Mr. Van Ross," said she, "I must ask you to excuse me to-night. I am very weary."

He looked at her with surprise. Here was no

trembling, blushing, loving little schoolgirl. The calm eyes of a woman were looking at him.

"Edyth," he said, stepping forward, "Edyth, darling, what has come over you? You are not glad to see me—me, your promised husband!"

"Mr. Van Ross," she replied, "I pray you, do not detain me any longer. You may call to-morrow morning at ten."

He was excessively annoyed, but departed in expectation of a speedy interview. Edyth was never so interesting to him as at the present moment. His curiosity was piqued, his pride injured, and his cause evidently endangered, perhaps lost. He called the next morning and sent up his card. Edyth had written a note and inclosed it with a small package containing her engagement ring and a sapphire bangle that he had given her. This she sent down to the parlor by Eleanor with the message that it was inconvenient for her to see Mr. Van Ross, and she must be excused. That young gentleman preserved a bland exterior, but returned hastily to his room at the hotel, and tore open the parcel with more zest than elegance. This is what he read:

"MR. KYLMER VAN ROSS—SIR: There is surely no need of farther explanation of my present conduct when I tell you that, while sitting yesterday with a sick friend at your hotel, I accidentally and unwillingly overheard every word of your conversation concerning myself. No apology is possible.

"With truest gratitude to the Providence which has delivered me from the sad fate of being your wife, I remain

"Nevermore yours,

"EDYTH WILSEY."

"Here's a pretty potpourri!" exclaimed Kylmer to Morely Sandford, handing him the note.

Morley read it, gave a long whistle, thrust his hands into his pockets, and said:

"Serves you right, Van! The girl isn't as tame as you thought."

"O, I'll make it all right with her yet," replied Kylmer, falling back on his invincible self-conceit.

"Mark my words, you never will, my boy!"

"But her father will not go back on me," re-

plied Kylmer. "My ancestors will pull me through this scrape."

"Then you should turn Buddhist at once and build an altar to the departed."

"O, be still, Sandford! I will write to her at once, and say that a man takes pride in concealing the strength of his attachment—too sacred and all that, for conversation with anyone."

"A man may be reticent about the love he bears his intended wife, and yet not insult the woman of his choice. I tell you, Van, you're in a bad fix. Don't make it worse by writing. Ten to one she would return the letter unopened. Your only hope now is in the old gentleman."

"Well, confound this place anyhow! I'm off on the 2:15 for the city. Papa Wilsey will just about be back from Canada, and I can get in version number one of this stupid affair."

"I'll go with you as far as the Branch," said Morley, "but I can't say that I'm pining for my native asphalt with the thermometer ninety-eight in the shade."

Edyth felt no pang of regret when Eleanor returned and reported that the caller had taken

leave, hoping that Miss Wilsey was not ill, and that he might soon have the pleasure of meeting her. She could not mourn for a man whom she despised. More than this, she had just passed from spiritual darkness into a marvelous light. Her soul was breathing a new, sweet atmosphere. It was as if she had just been lifted from a narrow, sultry valley to some glorious wind-swept, sun-bathed hilltop where every breath is laden with strength and healing. She shrank from telling Mrs. Leslie and the girls of her new-found joy. She feared that they would not understand. She longed for Miss West, the lovely dark-eyed lady of the tent, and yet she felt that she must not mar the plans of her companions by seeking other society. The week was only half gone, but the remaining days would seem long with her heart at the Grove, where she longed to go and learn more about Christ and his followers. She prayed silently for help and direction. During the morning she proposed a walk to the bookstore near the railway station, and her suggestion was gladly followed. Edyth's purpose in going was to buy a copy of the New

Testament. She did not attempt to conceal this desire from the girls, who were interested in looking over a pile of summer novels from which they made a few selections. Leaving the shop, they walked along the lakeside to the same little arbor where Edyth had sat to read her first and only letter from Kylmer Van Ross.

"Let us rest here a few moments, it is so pleasant and cool," said Serene.

"Edyth, what possessed you to buy a Bible this morning?" said Eleanor, quizzically, taking off her sailor and fanning herself with it.

"Why, Mel, what is the first book you would buy before making a tour of a strange country?" replied Edyth, pleasantly.

"O, Baedeker, I suppose. Cousin Belle says that the bright red covers look so cheerful in those dim old convents and churches in Europe. But I don't see any relation between my question and your reply."

"It is just this," said Edyth, with a little prayer for courage, and a rush of color across her sweet face. "I started last night on a journey that I know but very little about, and

this book will tell me what to do, and where to go."

"Edyth Wilsey, are you losing your senses?" cried Eleanor, dropping her improvised fan in her surprise.

"No, Mel, dear, I'm perfectly sane, and O, so happy! I have been led to know that the Lord Jesus Christ deserves the love of my whole heart, and the service of my whole life, a small return for what he has done for me and for us all, and I've started to follow him, started for heaven, and this book will teach me the way."

Edyth's voice, at first faltering, was clear and steady now, and her eyes shone with faith and courage.

"O, this is just too stupid for anything," said Eleanor, picking up her hat, and twitching at the ribbons absently. "If you were fifty years old instead of twenty, it might do for you to get these notions into your head, but at your time of life, and with everything to make you happy, I'm surprised at you!"

"I'm glad I'm not quite twenty, instead of fifty," replied Edyth. "I think it very mean to live years and years just for one's self, and

take and take from God's mercies, and then give him a few days at the very end when you're too worn out to enjoy this world or to do any good."

Eleanor scowled moodily, but Serene slipped her hand into Edyth's, saying:

"I'm sure you are right, dear. When I was so ill things looked different to me than ever before. The world seemed so misty, and death was real, and I was not ready to go."

Daisy could sit still no longer. Her volatile little brain was as uncomfortable as a humming bird tied to a stake.

"I think, girls," she broke out, "that you get pokier and pokier every day. I'm tired of your solemn faces. I'm not going to think of anything but good times. Come, Mel, let us leave these pious creatures to themselves. You and I will walk together."

Edyth and Serene were not loath to have an opportunity to talk over the subject so distasteful to the others, and by the time they reached the cottage Serene had asked to go with Edyth to Miss West's tent. They found Mrs. Leslie in a great flurry over a letter just received.

"Daisy," she said, excitedly, "your sister Christine writes that your Aunt Louise has come to Thistledown, and has suddenly made up her mind to sail for Antwerp with your Uncle Herbert next Tuesday, and Dr. Ellsworth's place was burned night before last, so your papa has invited the whole family over to our house for a few days, and little Clara Bevans, who is visiting Lottie, has been taken down with German measles, and our cook has been found intoxicated and has had to be discharged, and poor Chris is nearly crazy with responsibility. We must go home this very afternoon."

"O, that is too bad!" wailed Daisy.

"Yes, it quite breaks up our party," said Eleanor.

"I must wait here for my father," said Edyth. "It is only a short time, for this is Saturday, and he writes me that he will be here by Wednesday of next week."

"Then I will stay too," said Serene, "until I can hear from home, for the change is benefiting me already."

"Well, I think I am quite ready to go," said

Eleanor. "The air is filled with religion down here. It is much jollier at Richfield Springs, where my mother and sister are."

So it happened that evening found Edyth and Serene alone together, and under the circumstances the change was not unwelcome. After supper they walked over to Ocean Grove, and met Miss West coming down to sit in one of the smaller pavilions. Helen West felt her heart leap wildly as Edyth approached. She had decided for a time not to reveal her identity to this girl whom she loved more than any human being; but she thought that Edyth would recognize the name of West as that of her mother's family, and make inquiries concerning it. But Laurance Wilsey had once given Edyth a false answer to the question about her mother's maiden name, and Edyth believed her to have been a Miss Judson. Helen soon perceived that Edyth had no special interest in regard to the West name, and she also realized that it had been purposely concealed by the father. This fresh proof of Laurance Wilsey's undying animosity strengthened her determination to be silent, lest by enlightening

Edyth she might set the father and child at variance.

"Is this your first summer at Ocean Grove?" asked Edyth of Miss West, when Serene had been introduced, and the three were seated.

"No, I have been here for several summers," was the reply. "I am a teacher in a village in northern Massachusetts, and the decided change of air is very beneficial."

Edyth wondered at the light that overflowed the dark eyes as they rested upon her face. This woman was positively fascinating. Would it be possible that she could supply the long-felt want of the motherless girl?

"I have been telling my friend," said Edyth, with a smile for Serene, "about you. She, too, wishes to become a Christian."

"I am glad there are two of you," said Miss West, "for you can encourage each other. Miss Dudley, it is no small thing to lead a consistent Christian life, especially where one's surroundings are worldly."

"That is just the trouble with Edyth and me," replied Serene. "We have both been brought up to think only of ourselves; and our

friends, most of them, only care for social life and dress and amusements. I want to be sure that I am quite willing to give up—"

Serene paused with a little sigh.

"O, my dear girl," said Miss West. "Don't look at this matter as if you must make a great sacrifice to give yourself to Christ. Just enter into your religious life on the 'privilege side.' Don't stop and say, 'Must I part with this and that?' but come to him as you are, with full hands—bring him your habits, talents, friends, time, even your inclinations. Let him take all your little store, and cast away what is not good for you to keep, and use the rest for his glory. God once called a poor colored washerwoman, Amanda Smith, to give herself fully to him and his work, and it was a struggle for her even in her lowly place to yield her will to the Master; but she was enabled to do so, and he has made her the instrument of winning many souls. I have heard that woman tell what she gave up for Christ—'one old washtub and two of the best flatirons in Philadelphia.' Our best is no better than that, compared with what he gives in return."

They talked until the soft twilight was dissipated by the light of the lamps, and the ocean was a dim, vast expanse heard but unseen, only as an occasional wave broke into snowy foam within the radiance that whitened the sand of the shore. Serene's faltering desires gathered courage, and Edyth's confidence grew strong and sweet as the two girls listened to Miss West's words of counsel and cheer. When they bade each other good night it was with pleasant anticipations of the morrow, for Miss West had invited them to come to her tent and accompany her to the morning preaching service.

When the morrow came Serene had taken a cold, and was not able to go, and Edyth went alone to Miss West. It was an eventful morning to the happy girl. The first sermon after conversion falls upon the ear like a chime of silver bells. This sermon was on "Service," and the old truth, "You have a work that no other can do," was presented with striking emphasis and beauty of illustration. After the benediction had been pronounced, and the host of people were pouring down the avenues on every side, Edyth prevailed on Miss West to go

with her to dinner, for the former had to leave the Grove the next day, and Edyth wished to be with her as much as possible.

"I wonder what my work is to be," queried Edyth, in allusion to the sermon.

"Do not be anxious about that," said her new friend. "Only be sure that your love to Christ does not grow cold. The work will be put into your willing hands."

"Miss West," said Edyth, sadly, "it will be a great trial for my father to have me lead the plain life of a Christian. O, I fear he will be very angry when he knows that I wish to join the Church."

Helen West knew more about Laurance Wilsey's disposition than Edyth dreamed, and was aware that the coming conflict would be no trifle.

"I know it will be hard for you, child, but you have a Friend who has promised to be with you always, One who is strong to deliver you in every battle."

"May I write to you once in a while, Miss West?"

"Strange as it must seem to you, Miss Wilsey,

I am obliged to refuse your request, for a time at least. Some day I hope to explain. It will probably be many months before we meet again. I am going to give you this afternoon the card of a friend of mine, a minister's wife in New York city. She will be glad to see you, and will help you, I know. As for me, I will pray for you morning, noon, and night, Edyth."

The name came involuntarily, and seemed like a caress, and the great dark eyes were filled with a brooding love. The young girl was thrilled with an unspeakable delight.

"O, I wish I might see you often," she said, pressing Miss West's hand, "for you are more to me than anyone I have ever known. I cannot remember my mother."

Helen longed to tell her of the sweet girl-mother, but the time was not yet, so she kept silence, while Edyth continued:

"I cannot tell you how I have longed for her, Miss West. I think mother-love must be so true, so unselfish, so deep. It rests me sometimes just to think of it as I believe it is. Now that Jesus has come into my heart I shall not have such an unsatisfied longing, but still I

do wish it had been all right for my mother to have stayed with me."

"It will seem very strange to you, dear child, if I tell you that I, a comparative stranger, love you better than my own life."

Edyth looked surprised and questioning.

"I did not mean to tell you so to-day," Miss West went on, "but I want you to know that, although we may not write at present, anything that I can ever do for you will be gladly done, and that my quiet little home will ever be open to you."

Edyth could not understand this depth of feeling in her companion, but her own heart responded warmly to the words. When they reached the cottage Serene had come down to receive them. The hours passed swiftly until four o'clock, when their visitor took leave of them. Just as she was going she slipped a sealed envelope into Edyth's hand, telling her that it was not to be opened until some time of unusual difficulty or distress. Edyth lingered on the piazza a few moments after her guest had departed. A carriage from Long Branch stopped before the house. A

tall, dark, warm-looking man in a gray duster sprang out, paid the driver, and turned toward the cottage. Edyth advanced to meet him.

"O, papa!" she exclaimed. "This is a surprise!"

He forced a smile, asked after her health, said that he hoped to get a room, and went into the little office. Edyth felt that he was angry, and quickly surmised the cause. He went to his room, and appeared again just before supper looking as calm and unruffled as was his wont.

"My business plans were somewhat interrupted," he explained to Edyth and Serene, "and I came back to the city yesterday. I am sorry that your party was so soon broken up, but I should have had to spoil the fun even if the Leslies had not been called home. You must pack your trunk to-night, Edyth."

"O, papa!"

"O, Mr. Wilsey!"

"Yes; Mrs. Van Ross is going to take a trip to Alexandria Bay, and has invited Edyth and myself to join the party."

Mr. Van Ross had met with another consider-

able financial loss, and his wife felt an increasing tolerance for the Wilseys, not unmixed with friendliness. Edyth's face was warm with indignation, and her eyes flashed, but she did not wish Serene to have any knowledge of her relation to the Van Ross family, and merely said:

"Of course, papa, I will be ready to leave here at any time that you wish. I dislike to take Serene away from a spot that she enjoys so much."

"May I not telegraph for some friend to join you?" asked Mr. Wilsey.

"I think my mother will be glad to come for a few days," said Serene, half musingly, "so if you will be so kind as to send her a dispatch that I am to be left alone I will go to my room and write a letter of explanation."

After supper Serene went to write her letter, and Mr. Wilsey asked Edyth to walk up the beach with him.

"So you have been making a fool of yourself, young woman," he said, roughly.

"What do you mean, papa?"

"I saw Van Ross at the Windsor yesterday, and he told me all about it."

"Did he tell you why I dismissed him?"

"Yes; he said that Morley Sandford, who is a terrible case to run a fellow, had been joking him about his fondness for you. Kylmer had been drinking wine and was excited and angry at having Sandford use your name so familiarly, and so he got off a lingo about marrying you for money."

"Please remember, sir, that I heard every word of the conversation. If he is in the habit of taking too much wine, that of itself ought to make you unwilling that the engagement be continued; but if he would also speak slightingly of your daughter I expect at least to be upheld by you in ignoring him hereafter."

"Whew!" said Mr. Wilsey. "What a strong-minded creature! What an orator!"

"Papa, I despise him; I shall always despise him!" said Edyth, too indignant for tears.

They walked on a while in silence, Edyth praying earnestly for help from above. When her father spoke again it sent a chill through her heart.

"I have planned this marriage," said he, "for the wisest of reasons. He will give you the secure

position that I cannot. I have no special admiration for him, nor he for me. He wants my money, and needs it too. I want his name for my daughter. I will not be thwarted by a girl just from school, with silly notions of love, and no more worldly wisdom than a jellyfish."

"But, papa," pleaded Edyth, "would you make my whole life miserable?"

"Your notions of happiness are all stuff," said he, taking a vigorous pull at his cigar. "Position and money are the first things to be considered."

"O, how can I meet him?" moaned poor Edyth. "How can I travel with that family?"

"Van Ross has made you a reasonable apology through me. I command you to accept it. I do not wish to talk further on the subject."

Edyth had thought when they set out for their walk to tell her father of the new life on which she had entered, but she saw that it would be unwise to speak of it then. Her father took it for granted that she would yield to his wishes about the marriage, and his manner grew milder as he talked to her of the new house in town that was now nearly ready for furnishing,

and should be fitted up to please her. But Edyth said little, and finally expressed a desire to return to the cottage, where she bade her father a grave good night.

Long after Serene was asleep, and the light out, Edyth knelt, resting her elbows on the sill of the open window, listening to the restful monotone of the waves, and praying for deliverance from the approaching ordeal. Then she recalled a verse that Miss West had marked in her Bible that very afternoon, "Casting all your anxiety on him, for he careth for you;" whereupon she crept softly to her pillow and fell asleep to the music of the words.

Edyth spoke no more to her father of the trip to Alexandria Bay, but she did not go on the much-dreaded tour. The second morning after her return to New York she was not able to lift her head from the pillow. Mr. Wilsey's first impression was that she was feigning illness, but her hot cheeks and bright eyes soon gave him cause for genuine alarm. A physician was summoned, who sent for a trained nurse. For days the dreary conflict with fever went on. At times Edyth was delirious, and pleaded piteous-

ly with her father for deliverance from some imagined horror. After she was pronounced out of danger she lay weak and still one day, listening to the twenty-third Psalm, which she had asked her nurse to read to her. The nurse was a woman not many years older than her patient. She was a Christian girl of gentle birth and good education, who had chosen the profession of nursing as one essentially feminine, and who had brought to bear on the acquirement of it a strong will, a clear brain, steady nerves, and genuine but well-ordered sympathy. While she read the psalm in clear, low tones Mr. Wilsey stepped into the room unobserved, and was startled by the light on Edyth's face as she listened.

" 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.' "

"Agnes," said Edyth, faintly, "stop right there, please, it is so beautiful."

"Yes, Miss Wilsey, you have proved it true."

"My Shepherd!" said Edyth. "I am so glad that he found me before I was so ill. His arms

rest me. When I get strong again I will follow him anywhere."

Mr. Wilsey's brow wore a heavy frown, which deepened as Edyth continued:

"Agnes, won't you pray with me to-night?"

The nurse sank upon her knees, and offered the prayer of a little trusting child. Mr. Wilsey went out of the room with a storm of rage in his heart. He waylaid Dr. Ballston on the staircase and took him into his own sleeping room.

"I wish to get rid of that woman you brought here as soon as possible," he said.

"Why, my dear sir!" said the astonished physician, "she is one of the very best nurses in this town! You owe your daughter's life more to her skill and faithfulness than to my remedies."

"But my daughter is out of danger from the fever, and this creature is talking religion to her. It won't take much to make a canting, long-faced Puritan of the girl, for it's in the blood on her mother's side, and I don't intend to have her trouble her head with such trash. I've other plans for her."

"My dear sir," said the doctor, "Miss Miller must not go away for at least another fortnight. Miss Wilsey must not be grieved nor opposed in any way until she regains her health. Such a method will not spoil her sweet disposition. If the subject of religion is soothing to her brain, it is conducive to her general improvement."

The conversation ended, but Mr. Wilsey was continually on the alert during the remainder of Miss Miller's stay, and as soon as possible dismissed her, and put a gay French lady's maid, Corinne, in her place. But he could not eradicate from Edyth's heart the precious sustaining truths that the devoted nurse had sown there. Mr. Wilsey had hoped that during her illness Edyth would lose her repugnance for Kylmer Van Ross, for he had not relinquished the determination that the marriage should take place; but one day when a basket of luscious fruit was sent up to Edyth's room bearing the card of Mrs. Van Ross she said to her father:

"Please take it away. I cannot bear to look at it."

Still his courage did not fail nor his iron will

bend. After the invalid was able to drive out he took her to the beautiful house they were to occupy as soon as she was well.

"You will have no care," he said. "I have engaged a competent housekeeper. You will also have a companion and chaperon in the person of a Mrs. Severax, a cultivated lady, the widow of an artist. She will call upon you this afternoon."

Edyth said nothing, but shrank at the idea of taking an entire stranger into such close relation to her daily life. A few hours later Mrs. Severax appeared at the hotel according to appointment. Edyth took a prompt dislike to her. She was a woman about fifty years of age with small, glittering, selfish eyes, a profusion of yellowish gray hair, thin, bloodless lips, and prominent teeth. She was attired in a long lustrous black satin gown heavily trimmed in jet, and as she glided across the room rustling and trailing, and her black, beadlike eyes rested upon Edyth, the latter felt as if a snake had crossed her path, and her first impulse was to scream and run. She controlled herself sufficiently to hold out her hand to her visitor, and

Mrs. Severax laid her pulseless fingers for a second in the girl's palm. She had a fawning manner, and a voice that was suspiciously sweet considering its thin quality.

"I'm sure, my dear Miss Wilsey," she remarked after a few commonplaces had been exchanged, "that it is a kind Providence that has thrown us together—you so long bereaved of a mother's care, and I having mourned for years one only lovely daughter."

Mrs. Severax applied a very pretty handkerchief to her eyes, but Edyth sat like a statue, her blood running cold. Her visitor continued:

"Pardon my emotion, Miss Wilsey, but you are so like my dear lost Genevieve!"

A gleam of hope flashed across Edyth's mind. "If that is the case, Mrs. Severax," she said, "it will probably be too painful for you to carry out my father's plan, and we had better abandon it altogether."

"O, no, no!" replied the lady, recovering herself. "It was but a momentary weakness. I have a naturally cheerful disposition, indeed I have!"

Shortly after the prospective chaperon had

departed Mr. Wilsey came in and found Edyth weeping quietly on the couch.

"Well," said he, irritably, "what now?"

"I was thinking," she replied, "of what it will be to live with Mrs. Severax."

"You are an ungrateful child!" said her father, leaving the room in anger.

Edyth felt unusually lonely and sad that evening. The lack of affinity with her father pained her. He was certainly generous to a fault with his money, and wanted to do what he thought was for her best good. She wished that she might please him, and she dreaded the time when she must tell him plainly that she had chosen the very path that was obnoxious to him. As she had gained in physical strength she felt an increasing interest in the new home. She would have been hardly human not to have appreciated the opportunity to select at will from the treasures of the cabinetmaker and upholsterer, to linger over rich rugs, to decide upon patterns in table linen, to choose silver and glass and china, and, more than all, to spend hours in the bookshops and at the art dealers' All this took a great deal of time and thought,

and absorbed her attention so thoroughly that her delight in spiritual things had dimmed a little. Her aversion to Mrs. Severax, however, refreshed in her the memory of Helen West, whose loveliness and genuine tenderness were recalled in painful contrast to the superficiality of the former. She decided to go the next day and find Mrs. Dayton, Helen's friend, whose card was yet in her pocketbook.

The Rev. Charles Dayton was the pastor of an unfashionable church on the East Side. The little brick parsonage was brimming with life and love and echoing with the voices of six boys and girls. Edyth found Mrs. Dayton in the center of a group in the extension, which was fitted up as the pastor's study. There were a bright-eyed baby and a piece of sewing in her lap, two boys at her feet were struggling over decimals, a girl at her left was learning to mend stockings, another boy was drawing a map on the table, while from the piano in the next room came the sound of practicing.

"O, Miss Wilsey," exclaimed Mrs. Dayton, rising as best she could, and turning a bright face toward her visitor, "I am indeed glad to

see you; but how awkward of Kathleen to bring you in here!"

"Please do not feel annoyed, Mrs. Dayton," said Edyth. "I should have missed a very pretty glimpse of home life but for this."

"You see," said Mrs. Dayton, "my dear friend, Helen West, stopped here on her way home from the Grove, and told me all about you, so you are not a stranger to me."

Helen had confided to Mrs. Dayton the strange story of her relationship to Edyth, so there was a warmer interest on the part of the minister's wife than she would otherwise have manifested.

"Have you heard from Miss West lately?" inquired Edyth.

"O, yes, we exchange letters every fortnight, and have done so for years. In every letter she expresses much anxiety concerning you."

The baby was sent up stairs in the care of the eldest girl, and the boys were dismissed for a game in the back yard.

"I want to see Miss West more than I can tell," said Edyth. "It seems as if I must see her."

"Are you in difficulty of some sort, Miss Wilsey?"

"Only this: my father has just bought a fine house, and we have been very busy furnishing it, and I have put off telling him that I have started to be a Christian. It grows more and more difficult to speak of it, and somehow Christ does not seem so real to me as he did last summer."

"Congenial associations are certainly a great help in the spiritual life," replied Mrs. Dayton, "and you should have a church home as soon as possible. You will have to come out boldly for Christ."

"I dread the collision with my father," said Edyth. "He will want me to do many things that I ought not to do."

"I do not wonder that you shrink from his opposition, but 'the joy of the Lord is your strength,' and he will make the crooked paths straight and the rough places plain. Can you come to our prayer meeting to-morrow evening, Miss Wilsey?"

Edyth's heart leaped at the thought, even as a traveler catches a glimpse of a distant spring

in the desert. Just then Mr. Dayton came into the room, and as Edyth looked up at his open, noble, kindly countenance she felt that here was a man who could be a guide and friend. After conversing with her for a while he said, as she rose to go:

"It is very sad when a child has to displease a parent in matters of religious conviction, but do not fear to let your light shine. All heaven is on your side, Miss Wilsey. Also remember that there are two hearts in this city who will not fail to ask the Father to sustain and comfort you."

Edyth went back to the hotel strengthened in her determination to walk in the right path. She knew that she could not serve two masters. She thought perhaps to force the issue with her father by announcing her desire to go to the prayer meeting the next evening, but before she had an opportunity to do so she found that her father was expecting her to accompany him to the new house to see the effect of gaslight upon the color scheme of the drawing-room.

They took possession of the beautiful residence that week. Edyth's principal delight had

been in fitting up the library, which was paneled with antique oak, against which the warm, richly colored draperies showed to the best advantage. There were deep, soft rugs, and inviting chairs, low well-filled bookshelves, marble busts of a few favorite authors, a curtained alcove with its own ledge for books and a luxurious divan, and a magnificent mantelpiece framing a great fireplace that suggested morning studies and twilight reveries. Mr. Wilsey had jocosely remarked on seeing Edyth's intense delight in the preparation of this room:

"It is very evident who expects to appropriate this snuggery this winter. I must look out for myself."

But from the first he had intended to provide himself with a private office, and had even altered the plan of the house to admit of a suite of two small rooms adjoining the library. His daughter had never seen the interior of these, for he kept them locked and always carried the keys. Edyth's own apartments were a vision of fairyland, all pale blue and white and silver, misty with lace, soft with plush, and gleaming with mirrors.

The Wilseys were no sooner installed in their new home than Mr. Wilsey began to talk of arranging to present Edyth to society. Just at this time Serene Dudley came to call one morning. The two girls had not met since the memorable days at Ocean Grove, and Serene had not known of Edyth's illness. They both felt some restraint in speaking of the subject that was nearest to their hearts, but after Serene had been taken all over the beautiful house they settled down in Edyth's pretty sitting room before the glowing coals, and Edyth said:

"I was very ill, Serene, delirious part of the time, but whenever I came to myself I knew I had nothing to fear, for my new Friend was with me."

The quick tears came to Serene's eyes as she replied:

"Is it not wonderful, Edyth, the peace, the freedom from fear, the rest of knowing that nothing but good can come to one?"

"What did your mother say, Serene?"

"O, you know that mamma is quite a churchwoman, and was pleased to have me express a desire to join the confirmation class at St.

Andrew's this next season. She said that she hoped I would not take my religion too seriously, but that a proper degree of interest is becoming. Somehow I felt as if mamma did not really understand, after all. She is arranging my coming out, and she said she will be very pleased to introduce you with me, knowing that you have no near woman relative. By the way, Edyth, who is that—that—lady whom I met on the steps outside?"

"My dear, that is my chaperon!"

"You poor, dear girl! She looks too formidable for anything. I shall get mamma to take you out with us as much as possible. Can you let me know by to-morrow about our *début?*"

"Yes, Serene, and please thank your mother for her kind invitation. Are you planning for any study this winter?"

"O, yes! I'm going to join a literary club, also a guild for aiding the poor of our parish that gives a course of lectures on social economics, and I have already begun with a lovely art teacher. I don't feel exactly satisfied with my prospects. I want to do some real work for

Christ. At least, I do not intend to put much of my strength into parties and receptions. Edyth, have you told your father yet?"

"No, I haven't had the courage, nor just the right opportunity. I shall not feel settled until I have let him know how life looks to me. It will be hard to breast the tide alone! Sometimes it seems to me that I cannot struggle against his will, but do pray for me, Serene, that I will not give up!"

Mr. Wilsey heard with satisfaction of Mrs. Dudley's plan for bringing out Edyth with her own daughter, and in the preparations for that speedy event Edyth again postponed the declaration of her love and loyalty to the Saviour.

CHAPTER VII

It was the night for Edyth's coming out. She was to be at the Dudleys' home at seven o'clock. At six her gown had not come home. Edyth's usually sweet temper was much disturbed, and with the lapse of every five minutes her vexation increased. At twenty minutes past six she sent her maid to call Mrs. Severax, who only added to her annoyance by nervous expressions of wonder at the delay, and the added intelligence that Mr. Wilsey, who was to accompany Edyth, was pacing the drawing-room in a state of smoldering impatience. Three times he sent word that the carriage was waiting.

"I'll wear the white mull, my graduation gown," said Edyth, in despair.

"O, Mees Wilsey," cried Corinne, with her most tragic air, "it ees not fresh."

Just then the peal of a bell sounded through the house, and shortly after steps were heard slowly climbing the stairs. Mrs. Severax and Edyth both rushed into the hall in time to see

a slight girlish figure toiling up the flight carrying a large pasteboard box.

"Here at last," sighed Mrs. Severax to Edyth, "but I hope there are no alterations."

Corinne had snatched the box from the girl at the head of the stairs, and hastened with it to her mistress, the stranger following on, being not merely a messenger, but a dressmaker's assistant who was to attend to some slight details after the gown was donned. Edyth was too excited to notice the pale face and drooping figure of the girl, but exclaimed hotly:

"What does Madam Moray mean by this delay? I am nearly late for my engagement!"

"It was not the madam's fault, miss," replied the girl, faintly, "but my own. I left the shop more than an hour ago."

Corinne had lifted the shimmering mass of gauze out of the box, and the stranger was bending over it as she spoke, shaking out a drapery.

"Have you not learned to go directly on an errand like this, and not to dally and talk with your friends?" interposed Mrs. Severax, in her most incisive style.

There was no answer.

"This must be reported to Madam Moray," said Edyth, at the same time bending her head and shoulders to receive the cloud of loveliness that fell all about her in exquisite outlines.

"I beg pardon, miss," said the girl, finding her speech, "but I was really very ill when I left the Fifth Avenue stage, and had to rest on some steps before I could go on."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Severax, with a disdainful toss of her head.

A wave of vivid crimson swept across the girl's face, and her hands trembled as she tried to fasten a knot of ribbon in its place, which slipped from her thin fingers to the floor.

"Awkward!" exclaimed Edyth.

The girl quietly picked up the ribbon, and steadied herself by a great effort as she tacked it with her needle and thread where it belonged.

"The madam was very particular about this," she said. "She told me several times just where to put it to get—"

As the last word left the girl's lips she fell with a slight moan insensible on the carpet.

"How inconvenient!" said Mrs. Severax. "Corinne, help me lift this person on to the couch."

"Poor thing!" said Edyth. "She is really ill, then. Do what you can for her. Get a doctor if necessary. Corinne, my gloves and bouquet. Now my wrap," and the *debutante* swept from the room and down the staircase, at the foot of which her father stood gnawing his mustache and looking like a thundercloud.

"Never patronize that Moray woman again!" he said, as the carriage door slammed upon them.

"The maid was ill on the way, papa," said Edyth. "I left her in a faint in my room. I feel troubled about her."

"O, she'll come out all right!" said Mr. Wilsey. "Such people usually do."

But Edyth found that the worn, sweet face of the girl haunted her all the way to her destination, and even after she had joined Serene in the flower-decked drawing-room, and a brilliant throng had begun to pass before the two new-rising stars in the social skies, and flattering words and admiring smiles came

from every direction, that poor, pale face with its wounded expression looked reproachfully into her own. At last she was able to forget it.

In this atmosphere of gayety and adulation the temptation swept strongly down upon her to resolutely abandon her attempt to lead a spiritual life. Surely her way was hedged up. A reckless spirit took possession of her which manifested itself in her heightened color and sparkling eyes and in the light and easy grace with which she entered into the dance. She was very beautiful, and as her father saw her the center of one and another little group of young and old, and noted the absence of that serious restraint of manner that had annoyed him so much, he looked proud and happy and followed her with glowing eyes that at times met hers with approval.

That same evening a story was circulated that Kylmer Van Ross had bravely stopped a runaway horse on the avenue that day, and had doubtless saved the lives of two ladies at the cost to him of a broken arm. Edyth had her full share of the feminine love of a hero, and Mr. Wilsey hoped that this really manly and

notable exploit would soften her heart toward the offender, and so fulfill the plan that was in such jeopardy. Accordingly, as they entered the carriage to go home, Mr. Wilsey was in a more amiable mood than he had enjoyed for months. Edyth was now fairly launched upon the social sea, with smooth waves and bright weather and no mutiny aboard and no storm brewing so far as he could observe. Soon he would pilot her to the desired haven of his dreams. As they drove along he bent and kissed her forehead, a most surprising demonstration on his part.

"I was proud of my daughter to-night," he said. "Why can she not always make me happy?"

Edyth's brain was in a whirl. The evening's pleasure had almost won her to the world. It was also very delightful to see her father gratified. That wonderful night at Ocean Grove seemed like a dream, and Helen West a ghost of fancy, and the Christ that had summoned her to a life of conflict and self-denial had retreated into the historic shadows of the olden time. She had been foolish to struggle against

her lot. Perhaps her father was right. She longed to reply, "Father, I will," to Mr. Wilsey's affectionate question, but somehow the words would not come, and she said instead, "I wish I might."

The tone was so wistful and sincere that Mr. Wilsey felt still more encouraged.

"You shall go with me to Tiffany's to-morrow," he said, "and select a new ring, anything that suits your fancy."

He then went on to talk of the people who were at the reception.

"The very best people," he said, "except the Van Rosses; but of course Mrs. Van Ross could not leave her son. I always knew that fellow had grand stuff in him."

Edyth was nervously pulling off her gloves.

"Please, papa, don't!" she said, under her breath. "Nothing that man ever does can change my opinion of him."

They were both silent until the carriage stopped at their door. The mood of each had changed. Mr. Wilsey's usual irritation with his daughter leaped again into life, and Edyth felt a wave of disgust sweep over her soul. Surely

these two natures could never harmonize. As they reached the house a sudden remembrance of the helpless figure she had left on the couch came before Edyth's mind, and she said:

"I wonder if that poor girl is better!"

It was three o'clock in the morning as they entered the house. They had thought to find it dimly lighted and very still. Edyth longed for her own little room, where Corinne would be waiting with her soft, loose gown, and a cup of hot chocolate would soon be in readiness to be sipped quietly before the open fire.

"Late hours, perhaps, of necessity, young ladies," had been one of Mrs. Knight's axioms, "but avoid late suppers." So Edyth, who had taken no refreshments, had returned feeling some need of nourishment. To the surprise of both father and daughter, they saw that the windows of the servants' rooms on the top floor, Edyth's boudoir, and the reception room were all aglow, and as they mounted the steps Mrs. Severax herself opened the door, her face pale with weariness and terror. There were servants passing up and down, and muffled voices overhead.

"O, Mr. Wilsey," exclaimed Mrs. Severax, with uplifted hands and eyes, "that creature has actually died right here in this house!"

"May I ask to whom you refer?" said Mr. Wilsey.

"Why, the dressmaker's girl," replied the lady.

"Where is she?" asked Edyth, with startled eyes.

"On Corinne's bed, where she died an hour ago. She came out of that fainting fit and talked a little to Corinne, and gave her her address, and then had a terrible pain in her heart, and I sent the butler for the doctor on the next block. He came right away and gave her something that eased her, but he said he couldn't save her. He said she seemed to have lacked proper food. O, such a night!"

"You had better retire at once, Mrs. Severax," said Edyth, brushing past her and the housekeeper, who wished to give her version of the story. Edyth mounted the stairs with a quick step. "Poor, poor girl!" she murmured. "And I spoke so harshly to her. May God forgive me!"

Corinne, with streaming eyes, met her at the

top of the flight. "O, mees," she said, "it ees the end. Come with me and see the poor Charlotte. Beezy and Edla have done all for her like a seester."

Edyth passed through her own dressing room to Corinne's neat and cozy room. There on the white bed lay the mortal part of Charlotte Henson. The maids had indeed performed the last offices for the stranger with no unskillful or careless touch. The quiet form was arrayed in a delicate nightdress that Edyth had given to Corinne. The beautiful waving hair was brushed and arranged becomingly, and the hands lay naturally. Beezy had laid her crucifix on the breast. Edyth's quick eye took in all these details at a glance, but as she looked upon the thin white face sobs shook her frame. There was an indescribable pathos in every line of those features. Edyth sank on her knees beside the bed, and laid one of her warm hands upon the motionless one near by and wept bitterly. It was a strange scene—the child of wealth, with her dainty party gown falling in shining waves around her, sobbing beside the body of the homeless sewing girl.

"Do not, O, do not, Mees Wilsey," said Corinne. "The poor Charlotte spoke to me before she died and said, 'Your young lady, she will cry when she know, because she spoke in haste to me; but tell her it ees all right an' there's nothing to forgive; an' give her my love, but tell her too, please, there's lots of girls like me.' Then, mees, she gave me her name, and said she was an orphan, and had no friends, and lived in a room far over on the East Side. She took her bankbook from her bosom, and told me that there ees twenty-five dollar. She even had me write on a paper to get the money. She say there is a man who she pay to for long, and the twenty-five dollar ees the last that belong to him, and would I get it and send it. He live here in New York. Then she say again, 'Tell your lady there's lots like me,' and she go then."

Just then the towering form of Mr. Wilsey appeared in the doorway.

"What is this nonsense?" he cried, angrily, pushing aside Corinne, and taking his daughter by the arm. "Go to your sleeping room at once, Edyth. I have sent for the undertaker."

"O, papa," said Edyth, "where will the girl be buried?"

"Probably you wish her laid in our family plot, the one I bought recently in Greenwood," said Mr. Wilsey, scornfully, almost forcing her from the room.

"Promise me, papa, that you will see that she has a respectable burial in a nice part of some cemetery, or I shall not close my eyes to-night."

He had drawn her into the hall, inflicting positive pain on her delicate flesh by his iron clasp.

"You are a perpetual disappointment to me," he hissed in her ear; "I find you absolutely wanting in a sense of propriety. Down upon your knees beside a dead menial, and a stranger at that!"

"But," pleaded Edyth, "promise me about the grave and all that."

"If you will write to-morrow a courteous note of sympathy to Mrs. Van Ross, and send a box of orchids with it, referring admiringly to her son's performance on the avenue, I will guarantee that everything shall be done for this girl to please you. If you do not consent to my

wishes she will be sent to her proper place in the Potter's Field."

He could hardly have taken a more stinging advantage, but Edyth agreed to grant his request, though inwardly rebelling at the injustice. He opened the door of her room, and saw her cross the threshold, saying:

"You will not see Corinne again to-night. She is too much excited."

Then he left her without a "good night."

The chocolate set stood on a small table in front of the fire, and Edyth made her own chocolate with the little alcohol lamp, donned a warm wrapper, and sat down to think. She knew she could not sleep. The hateful white gown lay like foam on the carpet. She shuddered as she looked at the knot of ribbon. The face of Charlotte Henson floated before her eyes, and her last message, "There's lots of girls like me," sounded in her ears. The dance music had ceased to beat in her hot pulse. There was no pleasure in the remembrance of the reception. The thought of the admiring glances and flattering words that had appealed to her girlish vanity now sickened her better

nature. While she had danced in her costly gown this other girl only about her own age had died, and died of starvation, and she, the favored one, had given words no better than a blow to the perishing stranger.

Edyth, who had been on the point of giving up the hard struggle with environment to devote herself to the world, now found herself face to face with a terrible fact that fired anew the flickering spiritual life in her soul. Again she heard the words that seemed to keep up a persistent undertone in her life: "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." She had tasted of the peace of God, she had vowed fealty to her Saviour, and now this very night she had all but deserted him. Until a beam of the rising sun slanted through the curtains Edyth thought and wept and prayed, and as she prayed strength entered into her to bear, to do, to suffer. Falling asleep in her chair from exhaustion, she had a dream of a crowd of worn and pallid faces surrounding Charlotte Henson, and the Saviour standing near, who said, "Will

you live for these?" "Yes, Lord!" cried Edyth. He smiled upon her, and suddenly the faces changed into those of angels, and vanished in light and song. Edyth awoke filled with a strange joy and rest. The night, with its marvelous blending of gayety and grief, of conflict and defeat and victory, was over, and the sun was shining on a new created world. Her first need was sleep, and sleep seemed possible in that all-pervading peace. She sought her bed, and it was the middle of the afternoon before her heavy eyelids unclosed.

When she awoke it was with the feeling that something of great importance had occurred. Slowly the events of the night came to mind, and she knew that she was not the same girl who went lightly to the reception. Years might have intervened since then, so settled was her mind, so clearly defined was her lifework. She rang the bell for Corinne, who came softly and anxiously, looking very pale.

"Is my father at home?" asked her mistress.

"He has been out all the day," said the maid.

"You may ask Mrs. Severax to dress for a drive, and order the coupé in an hour."

At the appointed time Edyth and Mrs. Severax were driving in the direction of Madam Moray's establishment. On arriving there Edyth found that her father had sent word of the death of Charlotte Henson.

"She was a good girl," said the madam, "and O, what an eye and what a touch! She would have been worth a fortune to me in a few years. She earned good pay, but she never seemed to have anything for herself or any good times like other girls. She never associated with the others, except Jean. They were much together. I will call Jean, and let her talk with you."

Jean came with red eyes into the room.

"Can you tell me for what Charlotte saved her money?" said Miss Wilsey.

"I would not like to break my word, miss. I was never to tell. Somebody belonging to Charlotte took money that was not theirs, and went to prison and died there, and she was trying to pay it back little by little. She had to make a decent appearance, but she had no warm underclothing and no fire in her room in winter, and she lived on the least food she could, bread and tea mostly."

"Poor, poor girl!" sighed Edyth. "Well, her troubles are all over now."

"Yes," said Jean, "for she was a good Christian girl; but O, miss," and Jean's eyes overflowed, "do you know where she will be buried?" There was a terrible dread in Jean's tone. "If it is that—that—place, you know, I would work my fingers to the bone to get her out of it."

"My father has arranged for all that," said Edyth, quietly, "and I am sure that you will be pleased with what he has done. I myself shall order a suitable stone for your friend. I will find out where the grave is, and let you know, and next Sunday you and Corinne, my maid, may go with flowers. You shall have lovely flowers, Jean."

"O, miss, you are an angel!"

Edyth's face flushed with shame. "No, Jean," she said, gently, "only a young woman, full of faults, but trying to overcome them."

Edyth then drove to the park, and Mrs. Severax, in noting the different carriages and their occupants, soon forgot her inconvenience of the night before. She chatted so constantly that she did not notice that her companion scarcely

spoke. The grateful eyes that Jean had lifted to her face had filled Edyth with a new happiness, and between her thoughts and those of Mrs. Severax there was a gulf as wide as the poles.

When they returned home Mr. Wilsey had already arrived, and sent for Edyth to join him in the library.

"Well," said he, not unkindly, "I have carried out your wishes. The sewing girl is buried at Woodlawn. You may drive to the spot any day next week. Now may I ask if you have carried out your part of the agreement?"

"No, papa, but I will do so at once," replied Edyth, immediately turning to the writing desk and proceeding to select note paper, and to address an envelope. This little missive was soon folded and handed to Mr. Wilsey to read. He could find no fault with it except for a certain indefinable chilliness which breathed between the lines. However, he felt that it was a step in the right direction.

"Now get your hat and furs before dinner," said he, "and we will walk around to the florist's and order the flowers."

Edyth obeyed with no show of the inward re-

pugnance of her soul. She seemed to be living above it all, upborne by a high and holy purpose. As they stood in the florist's office she hardly noticed the wonderful pink and white orchids that her father selected, so absorbed was she in the thought of the pleasure that Jean and Corinne would take in spending a liberal amount in that very shop. As they left the shop her father informed her that he had received a telegram announcing that some friends from the South would be at the house the next day to spend the Sunday. He had met them abroad, and they had a standing invitation to avail themselves of his hospitality. He had told the housekeeper and Mrs. Severax, and Edyth would have no responsibility except to make herself agreeable, which she said she would be pleased to do. She wondered who these people were of whom she had never heard her father speak before.

They arrived just before dinner on Saturday night—Colonel and Mrs. La Grange, Mrs. Merle, a widow of thirty, her sister, Miss Montfort, and a young man by the name of Lorraine. Mr. Wilsey, Edyth, and Mrs. Severax awaited

them in the drawing-room. The men were distinguished-looking, and the women graceful and handsome, but given to a lavish display of jewels. All the party were loud and familiar in their words and actions. Edyth's fine sensibilities were wounded at once, and she was surprised to see her father emerge from his usual dignified reserve, throwing it aside with the air of one who had escaped an irksome restraint. Were such as these his own preferred associations? The dining-room resounded with gay jests and peals of laughter, and there were many allusions to a sojourn at Monaco, which Edyth did not understand.

When after the dessert the ladies left the men Mrs. La Grange, who had the assumed hilarity which is as painful in a woman of fifty as are her attempts to imitate the fresh color and youthful dress of eighteen, proposed that they give the men a surprise by taking possession of the smoking-room, and sip their coffee there instead of in the library, where Edyth had conducted them. Edyth, too courteous to express any surprise, led the way to an elegant little apartment finished in rich woods, and simply

furnished in leather, where Mr. Wilsey proposed to enjoy his cigars and his evening papers. Edyth ordered the coffee brought from the library, and the ladies seated themselves with the glee of schoolgirls at a stolen midnight spread. When Edyth had dismissed the servant with the tray she could hardly believe her senses as she saw Mrs. La Grange pick up a paper of cigarettes that lay on the table and pass them around to the others, who each took one and proceeded to light it and smoke it as if it were a matter of course. As the light wreaths began to circle around the heads of her guests something of the positive loathing in her mind must have expressed itself on her face. Never had she seen anything so vulgar and unwomanly.

"I hope we do not shock you, Miss Wilsey," said Mrs. Merle, leaning back in a deep morocco chair, with one white arm behind her head and her knees crossed, while she languidly held the cigarette aloft in her jeweled hand.

"I do not use it myself," said Edyth, with considerable severity, "and I did not know that ladies ever did."

"Why, my dear child," said Mrs. La Grange, in a patronizing tone, "have you not heard how the empress of Austria delights in the strongest of cigars?"

"Great thing for the nerves, Mrs. Severax," said Miss Montfort, smiling through a puff of smoke."

Mrs. Severax, let it be told to her credit, was very much disgusted, but she was nothing if not politic, and so she nodded assent. Just then the men were heard approaching, Lorraine's voice pitched in a very high and excited tone, as if he had been taking too much wine. There was instant silence in the smoking-room, and as Mr. Wilsey slid back the stained-glass door a burst of laughter greeted his astonished face.

"We're here, and we've come to stay!" shouted Mrs. La Grange.

"Out with the usurpers!" cried Mr. Lorraine.

"A most unexpected pleasure, ladies," said their host, bowing. "Stay, by all means."

While the men were finding chairs for themselves Edyth had an opportunity to ask her father to have her excused, so Mr. Wilsey ex-

plained to the company that the odor of tobacco affected his daughter so unpleasantly that she would be obliged to retire. There was a chorus of superficial regrets, but even Mr. Wilsey was relieved when the reproving eyes of the young girl were withdrawn from the scene.

Edyth actually fled through the drawing-room, and up the stairs to the pure air of her own apartments, and threw open the window for a few moments that the autumn wind might refresh her flaming cheeks. Then she sat down to read a chapter in her Bible. It was that last prayer of Jesus for his disciples, and Edyth knew that she had a place in it, that prayer that covered all the centuries of temptation and trial that were to come for those who should be in the world but not of it.

An hour later Mrs. Severax knocked at the door, and as Edyth opened it the sound of merriment and the clink of wineglasses came up the stairs. For once Edyth and her chaperon exchanged a look of genuine sympathy.

"It ill becomes me to criticise your father's guests, Miss Wilsey," said Mrs. Severax, with a sigh, as she took the chair that Edyth offered

her, "but," and she sighed expressively, "that Mr. Lorraine was positively imbecile when I came up stairs. There will be no breakfast to-morrow morning. Mr. Wilsey has ordered coffee served in the different rooms at nine o'clock, and luncheon will be ready at one."

Edyth's heart leaped at this information. Here was the coveted opportunity to attend a church service. Mrs. Severax sat for a while to talk over some difficulty among the servants, but as she left there was a strange sound on the stairs of slow and heavy steps and subdued voices. Both of the ladies looked over the balustrade, and saw Mr. Wilsey and Colonel La Grange carrying the unconscious form of Mr. Lorraine to his room on the third floor. Mrs. Severax quickly vanished into her own apartment, and Edyth just as suddenly retreated into hers.

"O," she murmured, "it is a shame—a shame! And in my father's house! How can I bear it!"

But in the drawing-room a woman's voice was singing a gay waltz song to a brilliant piano accompaniment, and until midnight the music and chatter went on.

The next morning Edyth was astir in good season, and had the pleasure of seeing Corinne and Jean off for Woodlawn well-laden with flowers, and with minute written directions for their journey. The two girls had met at the florist's the night before and had had a memorable half hour selecting roses and carnations. Edyth felt a sweeter pleasure than she had ever known as she watched the girls turn the corner. Then she had a quiet hour alone, in which she asked God's blessing on the day and read a while in the word.

When the hour for starting for church arrived she put on a dark cloth gown, and went downtown to the church where Mr. Dayton ministered. There was no sermon that morning, for the holy communion was to be celebrated. Edyth was placed near the pastor's pew, where the sweet-faced mother sat in the midst of her little flock and gave to the visitor a kindly smile that warmed her like sunshine. Edyth had never been present at a sacramental occasion, and as the tender significance of the service was revealed to her she felt that she would give the world to kneel with the others

at that altar saying, "Lord, I do remember thee." But although her whole soul responded to the invitation, "Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort," she felt that she had no right to accept it, not being a member of any Church. However, as the minister passed the blessed symbols, and said slowly and clearly, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy soul and body unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee; and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving," Edyth caught a new glimpse of the Saviour and received an assurance of her union with him that was unspeakably comforting. At the close of the service she hastened to speak with Mrs. Dayton.

"I long to be one of you," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I know that Jesus saves me, and I am determined to live for him at any cost."

"You had better be baptized, dear, as soon as you can have it done."

"Why not now, Mrs. Dayton?" said Edyth, impelled by an overmastering desire to receive

the visible seal of membership in Christ's Church.

Mrs. Dayton, greatly impressed by the earnestness in the girl's face and voice, made her way to the altar, where her husband still stood surrounded by a little group of his people, who were talking over some matter of current church interest. She drew him aside a moment, and presented Edyth's request.

"Like the treasurer of Queen Candace, she says, 'What doth hinder me?'" said Mrs. Dayton.

"Surely I will not hinder her," replied Mr. Dayton, warmly.

The congregation had mostly disappeared, but to the few who lingered he said: "My brethren, we have with us a young lady who desires Christian baptism at this time. She was never in her life present at a communion service until this morning, for she has only recently decided for Christ. She does not wish to postpone her privilege of thus confessing her faith, and becoming a member of the Church."

Interest, sympathy, and perhaps some curiosity were displayed on the faces of those pres-

ent, but no murmur of disapproval was heard, and Edyth walked to the altar and entered with all her heart into the solemn rite. As only a few moments had elapsed since the conclusion of the public service, the sacred elements had not been removed from the communion table, and the ordinance of baptism was followed by the opportunity to Edyth to realize her oneness with God's people everywhere, for now for the first time she had taken her place at that table which was spread by Christ for all saints.

She arose marvelously strengthened and blessed, and with a feeling of companionship most comforting. As she passed out of the church, after kindly words from the Daytons and others, Mrs. Dayton said to her husband:

"I wish that Helen West might have been here. Somehow I feel as if I wanted to hide that dear girl in the parsonage. It seems as if there is a hard path before her."

"God is taking care of his own," replied the minister. "Only their disobedience can thwart his plans for his children."

Edyth arrived at home just as the guests were gathering in the library before lunch.

"Ah, a morning walk, I suppose," said Mr. Wilsey, as she entered.

"A walk to church, papa," replied Edyth.

"How charming is youthful piety!" ejaculated Mrs. La Grange, rolling her eyes ceilingward. "Nothing ever kept me from church when I was a girl."

This far from brilliant speech seemed to greatly amuse the company, and the shout of laughter that arose jarred upon Edyth's every nerve. Mr. Lorraine sent down an excuse from the lunch table under the plea of a headache.

"Foolish boy!" said Mrs. Merle. "He knows he cannot stand champagne, and yet he persists in taking it."

"O, he'll be all right in a few hours," said Mrs. La Grange. "The worst of it is, he will miss the drive in the park."

The worst of it! Edyth wanted to inquire if a lost drive were worse than injured self-respect, but apparently these people had a different standard from her own. She looked across the table at her father, who was apparently in his true element; she felt, but somehow neither with a sense of loneliness nor dismay,

that the gulf between them was widening every hour. She had seen his eyes darken when she announced that she had been to church, and she knew that she would have to meet the matter later. She did her best to be courteous to these most obnoxious people, and held her own so well in an argument with Colonel La Grange that Mr. Wilsey's anger with her was somewhat mitigated. However, he silently resolved that she should never go to church again, and that he would enter upon a very definite course with her at the first opportunity.

At three o'clock the victoria was ordered, supplemented by a landau from a neighboring stable, and the party took a turn in the park, Mr. Lorraine putting in an appearance at the last moment and requesting Edyth's company on a stroll. She had felt at the lunch table that the holy influences of the morning had been dissipated, and she longed for the quiet of her own room. She loathed the companionship of Lorraine, but it was almost impossible to avoid it, and as he deferred to her in regard to the direction of their walk she proposed the vesper service at the cathedral, as being an opportunity

to hear some fine music. In her heart she welcomed the respite from conversation with him that the service would afford to her, and also the change from the gay Sunday parade on the avenue to the solemnity of a sacred place, even though it was dedicated to the ornate formalism of a perverted faith.

On their return to the house they found the others taking five o'clock tea in the drawing-room, and again Edyth had to repress the intense longing for a little time of meditation and prayer. There were now two hours to dinner, and Mr. Lorraine began shuffling cards for a four-handed game of whist, while Colonel La Grange challenged Miss Montfort to a combat at chess.

"But first, please let us have a little music," said the colonel's wife.

"Certainly," said Mr. Wilsey. "We must have that duet that Mrs. Merle and Miss Montfort gave us last night."

"Isn't Miss Wilsey a singer?" said the colonel.

"She has a pretty fair voice," said her father. "Edyth, you may lead off with a ballad or two."

Edyth had a sweet, well-trained voice, capable of great expression, although of ordinary compass. She knew that she had no songs suitable for the day, but she was determined not to add to its desecration. At school she had learned the hymn "Nearer, my God, to thee!" and had sung it mechanically at those spiritless morning devotions before mentioned. Now the words came back to her charged with life and meaning, the very cry of her sorely tried and troubled heart. She sat down at the piano and struck a few rich chords. The day that had brought her into connection with the Church of Christ should not be without a testimony at home; but O, how much easier it was there to confess her faith than here amid these alien surroundings! The courage with which she began to sing was the same in quality as that that has carried the witnesses of other days to the stake.

"Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee,
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me."

Her voice had never been so clear and flexible. She had perfect control of it. There was

a strange power in it, too, a mighty influence that held Laurance Wilsey spellbound in his wrathful astonishment. The hymn had a curious effect upon the whole group, somewhat as if a company of evil spirits had caught the notes of the blessed as they hurried by the gates of paradise and were detained against their will by the holy refrain. It was not until Edyth had reached the end of the third verse that her father could call out in ill-suppressed anger:

"There, that's enough of that stuff! Give us 'Twickenham Ferry.'"

Colonel La Grange had walked to the window, and with a sudden mist in his eyes recalled his mother and the far-distant past. Mrs. La Grange looked annoyed. Mrs. Merle turned pale and fixed her eyes on the carpet. Miss Montfort made a grimace at Mr. Lorraine, who continued to shuffle his cards.

"Papa, I prefer to sing no more to-night," said Edyth. "Kindly excuse me."

She arose from the instrument, and retreated to a convenient corner. A chilly constraint had fallen on the hilarious group. Mrs. Merle and Miss Montfort positively refused to sing their

duet from "Faust." But Colonel La Grange, with a satanic impulse that led him to smother the faint whisper of his good angel, stepped forward to the piano and in a full, ringing, rollicking tenor began a famous drinking song. When he had finished there were loud applause and calls for "The Low-backed Car," which he rendered with fidelity to both the brogue and the spirit. These performances of the colonel restored something of the congenial atmosphere in which these people lived, and the games went forward with zest. Edyth was thankful that she was not required to make up the number of players. She started after a little to make her way from the room, but her father motioned peremptorily with his hand for her to remain. She retired with a book to a nook behind the piano, but she did not see the words on the page before her. Her soul was swelling with a sense of triumph. She had not denied her Lord. The die was cast. Whatever lay before her of opposition or pain or sacrifice, there should now be no looking back. She took but little share in the conversation at the dinner table that night. No one attempted to engage

her in it, and there was no need for her to make any advances, as the chatter was kept up with apparently more ease than usual. Mr. Wilsey had procured a box for a Sunday evening concert, and ordered her to get ready and go with the rest. She asked to be excused, and he called her into the library and said in a hoarse whisper, with an evil fire in his eyes:

"You and I have much to settle to-morrow, miss. I command you to go with us to the concert, or take the consequences."

"Father," she said, and she was amazed at her perfect calmness, "I will take the consequences."

They departed for the opera house, and Edyth was at last free to go to her room. She knew that her father's threat was no idle one, but there was no fear in her heart.

"O, God!" she said, as she knelt beside her bed, "may this be the last Sunday that I will ever spend in this manner. Give me strength to be penniless and homeless if need be, but deliver me, deliver me!"

Edyth had never yet allowed herself to open the letter that Miss West had given her at parting, for in spite of her perplexities she had

not come to a place which seemed critical enough to admit of her breaking the seal. This night she was strongly impelled to take it from its hiding place and find what help she could from it. She hesitated, with her hand on the little drawer in her desk that contained the missive, but concluded to wait a little longer, and took up instead a small copy of the Epistle to the Romans that the same friend had given to her. Turning the leaves, she came upon these words that stood out as if written in fire: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Her father's guests left immediately after an early breakfast the next morning. Edyth was glad when the street door closed behind them, and yet she shrank somewhat from the inevitable interview with her parent. To her surprise, he did not turn upon her savagely as she had fully expected, although the smile with which he had sped the parting visitors vanished immediately from his lips, and a look of morose and dogged determination took its place. He led the way into the library to look over the morning mail. There was a pile of heavy white envelopes, the first of the inevitable rush of invitations.

"Sit down," said Mr. Wilsey, "and we will look over these together." He proceeded to open one after another, commenting briefly on each. "We must not fail to attend Mrs. Dellicker's ball," said he. "That comes first, and virtually opens the season. Then there is a dinner-dance at the Leveretts', an afternoon tea at the Winslows', and a theater party at the Van Rosses'. By the way, I've invited a few fellows to dinner for Wednesday night, Challis and Sandford and Van Ross."

"Papa, you cannot mean that you have asked Kylmer Van Ross to our house?"

"Certainly. Why not?" he replied, looking unflinchingly into her startled face. "Of course you will play hostess to perfection. "And this matter of the Dellicker ball," he continued, as calmly as if the girl beside him were not quivering with indignation, "must have your special attention. Provide yourself with a new gown, something imported, you know."

"Papa, you must allow me to send regrets to Mrs. Dellicker. I cannot conscientiously go."

His hand fell heavily at his side. His eyes suddenly blazed like evil stars.

"Explain yourself," he said, angrily.

"It is only this," said Edyth, pale but decided. "I have become a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I must please him first. I live in a great city where there are thousands of poor and neglected human beings who are dear to him. I must not spend my time and strength in a round of pleasure." She rose and stood with one hand on his shoulder, saying, "I do not want to appear stubborn nor ungrateful. You have been very good and generous to me. It grieves me that I must displease you in any way. Only let me follow my conscience, and I will be the happiest of mortals, and make you happy too!"

He rose, flinging her from him so that she fell against the desk, and then with a terrible oath he left the room, and the front door slammed behind him.

CHAPTER VIII

Edyth spent most of the day in her room nursing a violent headache. About two o'clock she felt that a walk in the open air would relieve her, and concluded to go and see Mrs. Dayton. On descending the stairs she found Mrs. Severax sitting in the hall dressed for an outing.

"If you do not mind, Miss Wilsey," said that personage, "I will take a walk with you."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Severax, but I do mind very much," replied Edyth, firmly but courteously. "I am going where it is not convenient for me to have your company."

"But I had your father's strict orders last evening that you are not to go anywhere alone."

"Very well," said Edyth, "then I will return to my room until my father chooses to send for me."

She did not have long to wait. Mr. Wilsey came home at four o'clock, and it was soon after that Corinne brought the expected summons to her young mistress. When Edyth entered the

library he was sitting before the glowing hearth, but he arose and held out both hands to her, and said, with a pitying smile:

"My poor little girl!"

Edyth's heart-beats quickened with surprise. Could it be that he had yielded? He led her to a chair and then resumed his own place, watching her fixedly.

"I was rough with you, child, this morning," he said, in a low, meditative tone.

Tears of joyous surprise sprung to Edyth's eyes. He had never spoken with such tenderness in all her life.

"I was rough with you," he went on, "because I did not understand the cause of your very peculiar behavior. I have since remembered that there was brain trouble in your mother's family. In fact, her father and her only sister both died in an insane asylum. I have tried to shield you in every way from the insidious approaches of such disease, but in vain."

It would be impossible to describe the cold-blooded way in which these words were uttered under the guise of the most affectionate solicitude. Edyth perceived at once that her father

purposed to bring her to obedience by pretending that he thought that her mind was affected, but the terrible intelligence concerning her mother's kindred came upon her with crushing effect.

"If these symptoms continue," resumed her father, after a weighty pause, "we will be obliged to summon medical aid, but I am positive that an exercise of will-power on your part will at this stage of the case restore a normal condition."

"Sir," said Edyth, sitting erect, "you know that there is nothing whatever the matter with my brain."

"There, there, my dear girl," replied he, with exasperating suavity, "I dislike to see you becoming violent."

"O, this is cruel, cruel!" cried Edyth. "You know that if you really thought me beside myself you would not talk with me about it in this way."

"If I thought you were in a dangerous condition I might act rather than speak," said her father, with ominous significance, half closing his eyes as he leaned his head back against the

chair, "but it is because I know that by regard to orders you are yet able to control the difficulty that I refer to it."

A servant here announced that dinner was served, and Edyth was obliged to take her place at the table and go through a form of eating. After dinner callers came, and it was late before she could get to her room. Corinne was nodding in her chair, waiting to help her mistress to bed, but was surprised to be told that she was not needed that night. Edyth locked the door and fell upon the white rug before the fire in an agony of perplexity and grief. She thought of Helen West, and determined to write to her, and as she rose to go to her desk there was a knock at the door. Edyth opened it, and saw Mrs. Severax in dressing-gown and slippers, with a pillow in hand.

"Pardon me, Miss Wilsey," she said, with evident embarrassment, "but your father has requested me to occupy the couch in your sitting room to-night. He is anxious about your health, and does not wish you to be left alone."

The chaperon could not prevent a nervous flush as she spoke. The door was about half

open, and Edyth looked forbidding, but just at that moment Laurance Wilsey's strong arm pushed back the door and impelled Mrs. Severax across the threshold. Edyth knew it was better to submit quietly, so she resigned the room to Mrs. Severax, retiring to her bedroom with a pencil and lap-tablet, and fastening the intervening door. She had begun to feel like a prisoner. She wrote several pages to Helen West, and the writing relieved her stifled and burdened heart. She told her of the dreadful news concerning her relatives which would always eat into her consciousness and blight her life. Then she spent a long while in prayer, finding then as ever that the waves of trouble grew still before the voice of the Master.

When Corinne came in the next morning Edyth asked for a cup of coffee and a roll, and sent down word that she wished to be excused from the breakfast table. She also told Corinne to take the letter that she had written the night before and put it in the letter box at the corner. It was none too soon, for Corinne had scarcely left the room when Mr. Wilsey knocked at the door, and was admitted by Edyth.

"Good morning, daughter," said he, with sickening solicitude, "I hope you are better this morning. We will have a drive after I have attended to a little business in the library. I wish to keep you out in the air as much as possible. It is the best thing for your poor head."

He even attempted to smooth her hair as he spoke, but Edyth recoiled as from a serpent. Just then he espied on the carpet by the desk a directed envelope which he picked up and examined. It was one that Edyth had directed to Miss Helen West, but had thrown aside on account of a splash of ink, and had failed to toss in the scrapbasket. Edyth had seen her father in anger before, but never had her eyes beheld such a satanic expression on any human face. Glaring at the innocent envelope, he said in an intense voice:

"Who is this Helen West?"

"A lady whom I met last August at the seashore," replied Edyth.

"Describe her."

"Tall and stately, with silvery hair, and the most beautiful dark eyes and musical voice that I ever knew."

"Where was she from?"

"A small village in Massachusetts. You see the name on the envelope—'Sunnyslope.'"

"Were you introduced to her?"

"No, sir," said Edyth.

"Ah, she pushed herself upon you, I suppose," and he crushed the paper in his hand and threw it upon the coals.

"Indeed, sir, she did not," answered Edyth. "She is very dignified and reserved in her manners, but ladies at a summer resort do not always wait for a formal introduction to each other."

"Did she give you any of these confounded notions that have so affected your head of late?"

"She helped me very much when I was in trouble," said Edyth, so simply and honestly that her father perceived that Miss West had kept her identity concealed, "and she seemed to me as a mother might, or an angel."

"Have you corresponded with her?"

"No, sir; she did not wish to write to me. I have never sent her a letter until this one."

"I suppose you wrote to gain support in your rebellion to my authority."

"I do not wish to rebel against you, papa; but I must obey a higher authority at any cost."

"I tell you this is a mania, and you must either overcome it or receive the treatment usually required by such diseases. As for this West woman, never write to her again. While we are out this morning you must order your gown for the ball."

"I am not going to the ball," said Edyth, quietly.

"I presume I must expect this stubborn resistance," said her father, his pseudo-patience but thinly veiling his inner rage. "It is characteristic of the disease. We will abandon our drive, as you do not seem to be as well to-day. I will send for you later to meet me in the library. Until then you will keep your room."

Painful as her father's course was to Edyth, she was wonderfully sustained and delivered from anxiety and fear. Most precious to her was the knowledge that she was no longer a secret and hesitant disciple of her Lord. She felt that matters were rapidly approaching a crisis, and she prayed that no pressure that could be brought to bear upon her should weaken

her resolve or cool her devotion. She prayed much that day, and found so much comfort in her Bible that it seemed to have been written just for her. At times she was harassed by the thought of the possible inheritance of mental derangement that might sometime manifest itself, but she was enabled to put aside even that torment, and trust implicitly in her heavenly Father.

Late in the afternoon her father sent for her. Something prompted her to take Helen West's letter from its hiding place and put it in the bodice of her gown, also the little copy of Romans. Then she went down to the library, that beautiful room into which she had put so much thought and enjoyment, but which had begun to seem to her like a bar of injustice. She almost hoped that her father would no longer cloak his wrath with that horrible pretense of sympathy. She would rather bear the whole force of his displeasure, even to physical violence, than to meet the sarcastic sweetness and false tenderness that he had chosen to display. To her surprise he was not in the library, but the door into his private office stood for the

first time wide open, and he sat there at his desk arranging some papers. He called to her kindly, "Come in," as soon as he saw her. She stepped across the threshold, and took the chair, the only other one in the room, to which he pointed. He then wheeled around and regarded her steadily for a few moments.

"I understand," said he, "that you will not accede to my wishes."

"I will regard your every wish, papa, when I can do so and be loyal to Christ and his service," said Edyth, looking at him calmly with steadfast eyes.

"But I wish you to give up all this nonsense," said he. "I have told you before that I hate Christians. I am going to give you a good opportunity to think this over. Your mental trouble happens to have taken the form of religious mania. There is an excellent cure for it. I have consulted a specialist to-day, and he suggests that you have the most absolute quiet and rest for several days. I have decided to put these two rooms of mine at your disposal for a while. You are to have no books or papers, and no writing materials. Bread and water is

the best diet for diseases of this particular sort. Before I leave you you may make out a list of such articles of clothing as you would like brought from your room, but it will be the last service that your maid will render you, as I shall dismiss her to-night. You may take my chair here at the desk and write your list."

Edyth realized that she was to be kept in close confinement for a time, but she was nothing daunted. She prepared the memoranda for Corinne, sending for her toilet articles and such clothing as she desired. Her father took the paper from her hand, carefully put away everything on the desk and locked it, and then, with a grave and sardonic bow, left the room, turning the key in the lock. A flush of resentment swept over Edyth's face, but it was only for an instant. She felt that she could bear anything so long as she was assured of the favor of God. She sat lost in thought until she heard the sound of voices at the door. Corinne had brought into the library the things that her mistress had ordered, but it was Mr. Wilsey himself who carried the large paper boxes to his daughter.

"I hope you will be very quiet in here," he said. "Your food will be brought regularly night and morning by my own hand. You will find a comfortable couch in the inner room. There must be no artificial light, as it is aggravating to your malady; but as you will not need it for reading or writing you will not be greatly inconvenienced. I will take this little clock away. The ticking might be disagreeable to you. You sent for your watch among the other articles, but I took the liberty of erasing it from the list. This is Monday; on Thursday night I will have another interview with you, and will then be able to judge if your disorder has taken a milder phase. If I then find the same symptoms of defiance to my authority I will be obliged to discuss more strenuous measures."

Again he bowed himself out and locked the door. Edyth proceeded to examine the situation, thinking with a sort of elation of how the early Christians had been thrown into dungeons, and then laughing aloud at the absurdity of comparing herself with them, shut in as she was in a little suite of two rooms and a bath,

steam-heated at that, and with plenty of daylight. On the other hand, she could perceive how one could almost go crazy even here, for there was no outlook whatever. The one window in each room was of heavy amber glass and set at a height above the head of an ordinary person. The walls were well finished and tinted a light gray, but were unbroken by a single picture. The first room contained the locked desk, without a scrap of paper or a pencil upon it, and two chairs; the second room had a couch and one chair. A clock or a calendar would have been a good deal of company, but her father had anticipated that fact and had deprived her of either. Then to have no light at all during the long winter evenings, and nothing to read in the daytime! Edyth felt a shadow of fear lest the monotony would prey upon her, eating into her earnest determination to be true to Christ. It was now twilight of the November day, and she aroused herself and began to arrange her belongings.

At six o'clock the key turned in the lock once more, and her father set a plate of rolls without butter and a carafe of water on the desk and

retired without a word. She had eaten but little all day, and would have enjoyed a portion of the good dinner that she knew was being served in the dining room, but somehow nothing had ever tasted so good as that prison fare. She had bread to eat that her father knew not of, bread from the King's own board, and her humble meal was blessed by the same hand that fed the five thousand in the wilderness.

Suddenly she remembered that she had brought Miss West's letter and the copy of Romans with her. She felt very grateful now for the impulse that had caused her to provide such relief and pleasure for herself. To be sure, she was now in total darkness, but she knew that she would be awake very early in the morning, and that the next day would be brightened and shortened by something to read. Nothing disturbed her peace of mind except the thoughts of the dreadful fate that had befallen her mother's father and sister. She found herself again wondering and imagining many things about them; and then came the ever-recurring dread of heredity that seemed to thrust a dark cloud across the sky of her future. But again

she found that the demon of anxiety fled before the wand of prayer, and she fell into a sound, sweet sleep, from which she did not awaken until daylight. Feeling entirely secure from disturbance, as the door of this inner room locked on the inside, she drew the letter from under her pillow. It had been saved for just the right time. From first to last it was a blessed evangel to Edyth. With wide, bewildered eyes she gazed at the beginning, "My own darling Niece," and with heart beating wildly with surprise and joy she read on to the happy end. The letter told the story of the dear old home at Sunnyslope, of the godly grandfather, and the sweet grandmother and her translation, of the childhood and young womanhood of Helen and Eloise, of the marriage and death of the latter, Edyth's own mother. Helen wrote also of her earnest prayer so wonderfully answered that she and Edyth might meet and love each other; and expressed her firm confidence that God would yet enable them to be together. "Remember, dear, that the roof that shelters me will ever be ready to protect you. Remember that I love you, and pray for you daily."

Many thoughts rushed through Edyth's mind, but foremost among them was the assurance that her father had told her a terrible untruth in regard to insanity in her mother's family. This removed a tremendous load from her. Then the knowledge that the woman who had pointed her to the Saviour, and had endeared herself so tenderly to the motherless girl, was her nearest relative brought with it a delight that was like a heartening cordial to the prisoner. She could have sung for gratitude, but did not wish to aggravate her father, and so contented herself with a prayer of genuine thanksgiving.

When she had dressed, replacing the letter in the waist of her gown, she went into the other room, radiantly glad and full of courage. Her father opened the door sufficiently to remove the plate and glasses of the night before, and to replace them with another supply of bread and water, and disappeared without a word. He had given her one swift, keen glance, and was astonished and angered to see no traces of fear or dejection.

Edyth spent the morning in reading the six-

teen chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, selecting several passages and some chapters for memorizing, and she was greatly surprised to find how agreeably the hours glided away. She had included a paper of pins among her requirements, and now made a calendar for the week on her pincushion. She also spelled out a verse she was committing to memory by means of pins. This she did in the sleeping room, as she knew that her father would deprive her of even such simple diversion should he come in suddenly from the library and discover it. She found that the supply or portion of bread and water brought in the morning was supposed to sustain her for the day, as no more was furnished at noon. As the day wore on she felt cruelly oppressed by her limitations, and by the lack of outdoor air. She could not pray nor study all the time, and her strong, lithe young limbs grew uneasy. She was glad when night settled down once more, that she could go to bed and forget for a time her father's tyranny, but the second night she did not sleep well because of the want of exercise and sufficient food.

The second morning she felt desperately

hungry. There was the penetrating aroma of coffee and the odor of broiling steak in her room, and the usual bread and water seemed to mock her vigorous appetite. She had read and reread her aunt's letter until she knew it by heart, and she consumed a long time in tearing it into the largest number of the smallest possible pieces, for fear that it somehow might fall into the hands of her father.

Again she employed several hours in Bible study, to her great instruction and refreshment. She also gathered new strength through prayer, for she realized that she had no power of herself to maintain the painful conflict. The later hours of the afternoon wore heavily. The rooms were ventilated by a fireplace in the sleeping room and a transom over the library door, but Edyth fairly panted for a deep breath of the clear cold air of the street, for a glimpse of the sky, for space and freedom. She thrust out her arms again and again as if to push back the bare walls. She remembered reading of a cell where the sides gradually closed in and crushed the prisoner. She dreamed that night that it was so with her, and

awoke with a stifled scream, then hid her head trembling beneath the bed covering.

The third day was one of struggle. The confinement, the loneliness, the silence hour after hour, the lack of exercise in the open air, the monotonous food, the absence of her usual occupations had begun to tell on her health and spirits. If she did not yield to her father she knew not what prolonged misery would be inflicted upon her. "I'm afraid I'm not much of a martyr!" she said to herself with a sad little smile. As the afternoon dragged on she knew that she would soon be called upon for her decision, and her heart almost failed for fear of herself. Again she knelt in prayer. "O Father," she cried, "thou knowest that I love thee. Help me to love thee better than pleasure or even life itself. I have no strength of my own. Lord, help me, for Jesus Christ's sake."

Helen West had received Edyth's letter of Monday morning on Tuesday noon. Like King Hezekiah with his letter from the Assyrian, she spread it before the Lord. She dared not write to Edyth directly, but on Wednesday she wrote earnestly to Mrs. Dayton, and said:

"My dear Edyth is evidently approaching a terrible test. If you and your husband will join your prayers with mine at some certain hour—may I suggest four o'clock to-morrow (Thursday) afternoon?—I am sure that she will receive especial help."

Mr. and Mrs. Dayton remembered the request, so the school-teacher bending over her desk in her deserted schoolroom far away and the two faithful hearts in the city met at the mercy seat even while Edyth herself knelt there for succor and deliverance, all unmindful though she was that other voices pleaded her cause and faith joined faith in her behalf.

One step she saw clearly before her, and that was to stand firmly for Christ. She made a careful toilet, selecting a gown of soft, creamy cashmere. It was after dusk when her father came to the door, saying, "I am ready to talk with you." She followed him into the library. The large lamp on the center table was burning brightly within its scarlet shade. The fireplace was ablaze with royal good cheer. The light danced and flamed and flickered across the richness and beauty of the room, the rows of hand-

some volumes, the glinting marbles, the roses in their tall Venetian vase, the comfortable nooks and corners, and warm, deeply glowing draperies. Edyth's surroundings for the past three days had made her more than usually sensitive to the luxurious charm of this her favorite room. Her father motioned her to a seat, but himself paced up and down in silence for a few moments. He was very pale and evidently suffering from one of the severe neuralgic headaches to which he was a victim. He began to speak in a rapid, excited, intense manner, running his fingers through his hair and frowning heavily. He no longer assumed an air of kindness.

"Well, you have made your decision?" he said, pausing in his promenade and tossing a book from one side of the table to the other. "Will you give up your nonsense?"

Edyth sat silent.

"You know what I mean," he continued. "Will you stop all this rant about Christ and his religion, and do as I, your father, wish—no, command—you to do?"

Edyth arose and went to a window, drawing

aside the curtains and peering out through the dusk into the snowy street, for a heavy snowstorm had only just ceased at sunset. She pressed her flaming cheek against the cool glass and waited while Mr. Wilsey went on in a higher and harsher key:

"You have your choice to-night. If you adhere to your folly, you are certainly bereft of your senses and must be treated accordingly, namely, taken from your home and deprived of everything that makes life worth living. What you have experienced for the past few days is nothing in comparison with what lies before you."

Edyth turned and took a few steps forward into the light, and stood quietly, her hands clasped easily at arm's-length, and with no fluttering of the fingers. Her father turned on his heel and faced her. Even in his wrath he was struck with the beauty of her well-poised head, shining hair, gentle, luminous gray eyes, and slender white-robed figure, as she stood in the glow of the lamplight with her answer on her lips. The words she spoke were almost as old as the Christian era, inspired words of one who feared

neither the emperor on his throne, nor the darkness of the Mamertine, nor the hungry lions of the arena, nor the executioner's sword. She had pored over them in her solitude, and they had burned themselves into her inmost consciousness:

"I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ my Lord."

There was silence between the two as she finished. The fire crackled on the hearth. The tall old-fashioned clock ticked solemnly. The sound of snow shovels up and down the street marked the stillness. Something seemed to be struggling with Laurance Wilsey's anger and determination. But when he replied he said:

"You have spoken, and my course is clear. Weary months from now, when you have long cried to your Christ for help and no help has come, you may remember your father and your home, and humbly seek for what you cast from you to-night."

There was intense bitterness in his tone. He waved her back toward the room she had left, and shortly afterward sent a maid with a tray of food from the dinner table. Then he locked the door as usual, leaving her in suspense as to his further procedure.

It was yet early in the evening when the street doorbell was rung furiously by a messenger with a business telegram, and Mr. Wilsey had occasion to come back into his office to secure some important papers that he kept in his desk. He lighted the gas for a few moments, and Edyth asked if a fire might be built in the inner room to secure better ventilation. He consented, and summoned the maid and stood by and watched her while the sticks were laid and lighted. He then went out with his package of papers, having relocked his desk. As the door closed behind him, and Edyth heard the key turn in the lock, leaving her once again in darkness and solitude, a great wave of misery swept over her. Evidently some terrible trial lay before her, probably incarceration in an asylum for the insane.

The fire was now blazing brightly in the other

room, and she started from her chair in the office to go and sit in the light. As she arose a small golden comb fell from her hair to the floor, and as she felt along the rug for it her fingers came in contact with a thin, flat key, which she involuntarily slipped in her pocket, while she replaced the comb. A strain of one of the songs that she had heard in the Temple at Ocean Grove came back to her mind: "Thy God is able to deliver thee." Yes; God was stronger than all the agents of evil. He could deliver her from the cruel net that was tightening about her steps. Would he do so? She drew a chair before the hearth, and sat down to continue her thoughts. As the wandering light of the fire flickered along the walls she idly noticed what had previously caught her passing attention, that the space between the mantel and one corner of the room was occupied by what was evidently a small clothes closet. She had wished that her father had given her access to it for her gowns. There was no knob on the door. Only a keyhole was visible. Actuated by a sudden impulse, Edyth arose, took from her pocket the key she had just found, and tried it in the lock

of the closet. It fitted perfectly and turned with ease. She opened the door, and started back in amazement. No rows of hooks hung with garments nor a series of well-ordered shelves confronted her, but she saw the small landing of a steep and narrow staircase, from which she shrank back in affright. Then gathering courage, she tore the side from the cover of one of her paper boxes, lighted it in the fire, and held it as a torch down the stairway, thereby discovering that it was only a short descent and terminated at a low door in the side of the house. She had read of such secret exits in the stories of old castles, but this lacked all the elements of grewsomeness. Here were no broken, slippery steps, no sudden turns, no dark depths beneath. It was only a private entrance to a modern mansion. The steps ran along the rough stone wall of the basement story, but were inclosed on the other side by a neatly painted partition of wood.

Edyth made sure that her sleeping-room door was securely fastened, and then ventured down to the foot of the stairs. It was easy to find the lock, and to her great delight the same key

fitted it. She opened the door softly, and a gust of outer air blew in upon her. She looked through the opening, and observed that the door, which was very small, led into an area-way right beside the regular side entrance to the basement. It had a false covering of matched stuff like the rest of the interior of the shelter to the big, iron-grated door, and on the outside the keyhole was skillfully concealed by some ornamentation that extended around the whole place.

Edyth did not meditate any longer that night before the fire. Escape was easy, and she determined to leave at once. Suddenly she bethought herself that she was without a hat or wrap of any description, and that no street gown nor even a pair of gloves nor boots was among her boxes. She did not hesitate, however, on her course. She dared not delay to change her white gown for a more suitable one. Her father might miss the private key at any moment from his pocket. She had her pocket-book containing nearly ten dollars, and she made a small parcel of necessities, tying a few jewels up in a pocket handkerchief. She slipped

her feet into a pair of fur-trimmed bath shoes, wrapped her head in a white lace fichu, and threw a small down coverlet of light blue silk around her shoulders. Even in her haste and peril she almost laughed aloud at her strange costume. She made her way down the stairs and out into the area, shutting the door behind her. It was after eight o'clock, and the streets in that neighborhood were almost deserted except for a belated snow shoveler finishing his task and whistling to his dog.

Trembling with joy and fear and excitement, Edyth made her way, passing in one place under an awning where wedding guests were entering from their carriages. She had determined to get to Mrs. Dayton, and as she walked on she saw a cab drive up to a house. A man jumped out, paid the driver, and dismissed him. Fortunately the cabby took the opportunity to remove the snow from his horse's feet. Edyth hurried forward and asked him to take her to the distant street and number, agreed to his price, promised him an extra dollar, and soon found herself making difficult but sure progress to the little East-Side parsonage.

CHAPTER IX

When Edyth rang the doorbell of the Rev. Mr. Dayton's house it was nearly ten o'clock, and the pastor and his wife had already gone up stairs to their room, and were even then talking about her with considerable anxiety. The sound of the bell at all hours from dawn to midnight was more common than its silence, and Mr. Dayton went himself to answer it, stopping to relight the gas in the hall, and wondering if some parishioner were ill, or if a stray couple wanted to get married. He was startled from his habitual poise when he saw Edyth Wilsey in her odd attire asking for admission. Hastily calling his wife and lighting up the parlor, he invited Edyth to a chair. She was very pale, and her teeth chattered so with nervousness that she could not control her speech for a few moments. When Mrs. Dayton appeared and opened her motherly arms in welcome Edyth fell into them and sobbed in silence. Mrs. Dayton drew her down beside herself on a sofa, and the fugitive grew quiet and able to

relate the events of the week. Mr. Dayton looked very grave and thoughtful, and his wife, in spite of her warm sympathy, was wondering where she could make a place for the unexpected guest, as the one spare sleeping room was even then in the possession of a cousin and his wife from the country.

"My dear child," said Mr. Dayton, "you are made of the real martyr stuff, and I rejoice in your heavenly courage. We must consider at once what is best for you to do. Your father is not a man to let you so easily escape him. You will surely be traced, and I think that you had better allow me to take you to a safer place than this to-night. Clara," he said to his wife, "don't you think that Uncle John Campbell and his wife would open their hearts and home to this dear girl?"

"They would do anything for the Master, and for you, Charles, as his representative," she replied. Then turning to Edyth she said, "It is a lovely old Scotch couple, who have a neat, cozy little home and no family."

"I'll run around and see them at once," said Mr. Dayton, putting on his overcoat and hat.

"I am sorry to have you go another step to-night, dear," said Mrs. Dayton to Edyth, "but we must not allow you to be found and persecuted. Now let me see what I can do for you. You are much more slender than I, and my gowns would be awkward for you, but you can wear my fur-lined circular that my brother sent me last winter, and I have a little black fascinator that will be less conspicuous and warmer than that white lace scarf."

Mrs. Dayton went to get the wraps, stopping long enough on her way back to prepare a steaming cup of cocoa on her little alcohol stove. "Are you sure that your feet are warm and dry?" she said, going down on her knees to examine Edyth's footgear, and satisfying herself that the fur-trimmed bath shoes had kept out the dampness.

Mr. Dayton returned in half an hour and told how he had found "Uncle John" and his wife still about the house, having entertained a party of friends for the evening, and of how the kind old eyes had grown misty and the tongues had lapsed into the broadest Scotch as he told them in confidence something of Edyth's story.

"The puir bonnie lassie," Jeanie had said, drying her glasses on her white apron. "We canna turn her awa the nicht, John."

"No, no, Jeanie. We couldna rin with a pillow for the Lord when he had no spot for his head, but it isna too late so lang as any bairn o' his has need o' ane."

"I'll gae noo an' spread the best bed for the mitherless lamb," said Mrs. Campbell.

"It's a sweet, quiet place to be," said Mrs. Dayton, as she helped Edyth on with the cloak. "Aunt Jeanie Campbell's best bed is a marvel, and you'll be as safe in it to-night as if you were on the Shetland Isles."

An hour later Edyth was lying peacefully in the soft, fresh, snow-white bed in Jeanie Campbell's spare room. The linen was fragrant with white melilot, reminding one of summer fields, and the whole place breathed of purity and rest. Keenly as Edyth felt herself to be a wanderer and dependent upon the kindness of others, a blessed sense of security crept over her. She thought of the soothing "gude nicht" of the serene old saint, her hostess, who turned as she left the room with her candle and said, "In the

covert of thy presence shalt Thou hide them from the plottings of man."

Edyth fell asleep like a weary child, and did not open her eyes again until broad daylight. Mr. Dayton came soon after breakfast for further conference. Mr. and Mrs. Campbell assured him that their guest was welcome to stay indefinitely, but he replied:

"Miss Wilsey's father will immediately take measures to recover his daughter. If the cabman who brought her to us is found, and remembers the number of our house, or even the street, she will soon be traced. I am going from here to see Mrs. Walthope and arrange for a more remote shelter."

Edyth spent the morning with Mrs. Campbell, receiving much inspiration from the experience and beautiful counsels of that genuine Christian woman. Mrs. Campbell told her that Mrs. Walthope was a wealthy widow with no children, and that she had belonged for many years to their church, but within a decade had removed her residence to a little town in the suburbs, retaining her membership, although not often able to attend services, and still con-

tributing generously toward the current expenses. She was a devoted Christian, simple and economical in her way of living, but with an open purse for God's work. At the mention of the name of Walthope, Edyth's brow had contracted in a puzzled little frown.

"I have surely heard that name somewhere," said she. "It is not common, and has sometime struck me forcibly, even as it does now."

But after a few moments of rummaging on the shelves of memory she abandoned the effort to remember. Mrs. Dayton dropped in a short time before noon, and as Edyth had told her of Miss West's letter there was no longer any hindrance to their free conversation about so dear a mutual friend, and Mrs. Dayton was able to enhance even the loveliness with which Edyth's ardor had clothed her aunt's character.

"I would like to be with her," she said.

"Yes, dear," said Mrs. Dayton, "but would it be wise just yet?" You know that your father is aware that you have written to her, and he might think you would go there for shelter."

Just then Mr. Dayton returned from his errand.

"Mrs. Walthope will be delighted to have a visit from Miss Wilsey," said he, "and we had better take the three o'clock train from the Grand Central. It is not impossible that the station is already under surveillance, and we must arrange a complete disguise."

The Scotch lady was nearer Edyth's size than Mrs. Dayton, and she selected a dark cotton print gown from her store that fitted her visitor tolerably well, and was just the right length. She also provided an old gray woolen shawl, and a crocheted scarf in lieu of a hood. Mr. Dayton had procured a pair of cheap black mittens and shoes whose coarseness were a torture to Edyth's delicate feet, but which were the right size. These were scratched and otherwise defaced to give them a worn appearance. A thick brown veil completed this peculiar outfit, and a market basket containing a few potatoes and turnips and a brown paper parcel added a touch of reality. Edyth laughed until she cried when she saw the reflection of herself in the pier glass. She tried to practice the weary, shambling gait of a middle-aged scrubwoman.

"Now," said Mr. Dayton, "you must not appear to have any acquaintance with me whatever. Simply follow me at a little distance. When I reach Mrs. Walthope's house I will stop and consult my watch and walk on, but you must turn in at the driveway. I bought the tickets on the way down. Slip this one in your mitten."

Mr. Dayton went down the front steps, and shortly after what was an apparently respectable but indigent workingwoman emerged from the area gate. If the neighbors could have looked into the basement hall a moment earlier they would have been surprised to have seen the woman with the basket embraced and kissed most heartily by two lovely ladies.

"God gae wi' ye, my bairnie," said Jeanie, between her tears.

Mr. Dayton walked to the nearest avenue, and boarded an uptown car. Edyth waited for the next one. He was in sight when she alighted at Forty-second Street, and even in the crowd that pressed in front of the exit to the train she had no difficulty in keeping his tall form in

view. She little knew that as she went into the station she passed right before the eyes of a paid detective who had her photograph in his pocket. After a short ride the train stopped at a small but picturesque stone station, where Mr. Dayton alighted. He had not exchanged a look nor a word with Edyth since they started. She followed him afar along the village street, coming shortly to a broad avenue lined with pretty cottages with fine lawns and large trees. Here her guide turned and walked on, pausing after a while at the entrance to a driveway leading under a long arch of trees to a plain brick mansion with a wide veranda. Mr. Dayton consulted his watch and passed on, and for a second Edyth felt as if she must throw back her veil, cast aside her basket, and run after him, such a desolate, homesick feeling took hold of her.

She went with shrinking steps along the drive and around to a rear door. Her arm was aching with the weight of the basket, but her heart throbbed so painfully that she was hardly conscious of her weariness. A gay little cutter with luxurious robes stood at the front steps, and a spirited horse tossed his nose impatiently

in the air and flaunted his scarlet pompons, pawing restlessly and jingling his silver bells. Mrs. Walthope always indulged herself in a good horse. A dark, handsome young lady in seal cap and coat and a rich red gown came down the steps and entered the sleigh. A groom who had been holding the horse handed her the reins and tucked in the heavy robe. As Edyth passed the corner of the piazza she saw that the young woman was her old school friend Eleanor Lee, "Melpomene," whom she had not seen since their parting at Asbury Park. Eleanor sped like the wind down the avenue, and Edyth knocked timidly at the servant's door. The maid who answered the knock had been ordered by her mistress to turn no woman away who should ask for her that afternoon. The maid looked in amazement when the quaint figure at the door handed her a visiting card. It was one of Mr. Dayton's with an announcement of his church services on the back of it.

There was only a brief delay, and Edyth was ushered into the sitting room of Mrs. Walthope, and was greeted by that lady with sincerest cordiality. Mrs. Walthope was a tall, erect,

slender woman with snowy hair and a somewhat severely dignified countenance. Her eyes were dark and piercing, but her firm mouth had kindly lines about the corners, and her voice was not harsh, although a trifle hard in quality. She was dressed in black silk with white lace in the neck and sleeves, and wore a brooch containing a miniature of Mr. Walthope taken at the time of his marriage, forty years before. She motioned Edyth to a chair, and with her own hands removed her wraps.

"It is more than kind of you, Mrs. Walthope," said Edyth, "to let me come here. I hope I shall not have to trespass long upon your hospitality."

"My dear Miss Wilsey, this episode is quite a break in my unromantic life, as if it had turned into a storybook and I was one of the characters. My father's house was a station on the underground railroad, long, long before you were born, and I hope that I stand as ready as he was proved to be to share my roof and my daily bread with the Lord's oppressed little ones. Now that your shawl is removed I see that your gown is none too warm. Come with me up to

my own room, and we will try to make you more comfortable."

Once again Edyth was clothed in a dress of another, this time a gray wrapper of Mrs. Walthope's, too long in the sleeves and on the shoulder seams. She told her hostess how she had escaped in a white cashmere dinner gown.

"To-morrow," said Mrs. Walthope, "I will send to town for materials, and have a dressmaker here provide you with something to wear."

Edyth drew her small package of jewels from her bosom, and laid them in Mrs. Walthope's lap.

"Please do with them as you see fit," she said, simply.

"Then I will put them in my safe," replied Mrs. Walthope, smilingly, "until you want them."

"But I cannot bear to be indebted to a stranger for food and clothing," said Edyth.

"Miss Wilsey," said her new friend, laying one hand on hers, "please put aside all thoughts of that sort and be perfectly content. All that I have comes from my Father, who is your

Father too, and you and I are sisters in Christ. I feel it an honor to minister to one who is suffering for his truth's sake."

"Dear Mrs. Walthope!" said Edyth, involuntarily, touched beyond expression.

Her hostess smiled a little sadly, and a shadow rested for an instant on her brow. "Many call me queer and stingy and hard-hearted. It seems strange to hear a word of real endearment."

"I thought I saw an old chum of mine drive away from your door as I came in," said Edyth, to break a rather embarrassing silence.

"What! are you the Miss Wilsey who was at Madam Knight's with Eleanor?" asked Mrs. Walthope, in great surprise. "She is my brother's daughter, and she is here now on a visit. I have not told her that I expected you. Will you wish to meet her?"

"Why, certainly," replied Edyth. "She will have no sympathy with my course, I know, but she is a part of my lovely years at school, and I will be glad to see her."

It all came back to Edyth now, how Eleanor used to talk of her Aunt Walthope in no very

loving nor respectful terms, ridiculing her plain ways, her religion, and the close management of her household.

"We take turns in being sweet on her," Eleanor had said, "for she's worth a pile, and we are her nearest relatives. I always dread my time to visit her in her stiff, pious, lonely house; but there's one thing in my favor—she always keeps an elegant horse, and I drive to my heart's content."

Edyth did not feel an unmixed delight at the thought of Eleanor's presence. Their friendship had met with an entering wedge when Edyth announced at Asbury Park her desire to be a Christian, and Eleanor had scorned and resented the message.

"Eleanor is far from the kingdom," said her aunt. "I don't know that I ever saw a young woman so eager for the world. She is either hilarious over some prospective pleasure or moody and discontented for the lack of excitement. She has plenty of capacity for good, but it is appropriated by foolishness at present."

When Eleanor returned from her drive her surprise at meeting Edyth was unbounded. She

had been angry with the latter, and had not written to her because Edyth's straightforward confession of Christ to her girl friends had been a dart that had sped to Eleanor's soul and had never ceased to rankle there.

When Edyth was preparing for rest that night Eleanor came to her door and asked for admittance. She had already promised her aunt that she would reveal to no one Edyth's presence in the house. Edyth invited her in, and Eleanor threw herself on the sofa and began to talk in a subdued tone, but rapidly and with much excitement.

"I want to tell you my troubles," said she, as Edyth took a chair beside her. "I'm here for a purpose, and fear that I'm not going to succeed. My father lost the most of his money a little while ago, and we've had to cut down awfully."

Eleanor paused a moment as if hesitating as to the wisdom of turning her heart inside out. Then with a flushing cheek and averted eyes she went boldly on:

"To make matters worse just now, there's a man in the case, Edyth, a magnificent fellow,

the greatest catch in Baltimore. A party is being formed for a Mediterranean trip after the holidays, southern France, you know, and Italy, and Algiers, and Egypt, and all that. It is a small party under the care of an elderly professor of languages and his wife, and only the very best people will be in it. This man is going, and his unmarried sister and her girl friend—O, Edyth, her friend, not a bit pretty, but with heaps of money and an elegant figure, and that subtle, elusive, victorious quality called 'charm!' O, how I hate her! When I am around he seems to have no eyes nor thoughts for her. He has taken me out a lot too. If it wasn't for this girl with her indescribable atmosphere I should be sure of him. Father positively cannot afford to send me on this cruise, and yet I know if I could go there would be little doubt of the result—my market would be made; whereas if she goes and I don't, good-bye to all my prospects. I want two thousand dollars clean cash, and I must have it even if I have to steal it! Aunt Roxana shows no signs of yielding, although I have told her that my life's happiness depends on it."

Edyth regarded Eleanor in silence for a while, pity and disgust mingling in her heart. She was accustomed to Eleanor's extravagancies of speech and manner, but this coarseness of mind was of later development, and Edyth inwardly recoiled from it, even while she longed to tell her of nobler aims and a tranquil mind. Eleanor was in a fever of unrest, and her great dark eyes blazed with the fire of ambition.

"Why don't you answer me, Edyth?" she said, raising her voice. "It makes me mad to see you sit there so placid and silent."

"I am wondering how I can help you, Mel," replied Edyth. "O, if you only would let go of yourself, and turn to your heavenly Father, and let him undertake your life for you!"

"Nonsense!" retorted Eleanor, rising abruptly. "Your religion has done great things for you so far, I should say. It has taught you to defy your kind father, and has driven you to this villainous outpost of civilization into one of Aunt Roxana's lugubrious double-gowns."

"But, Mel," said Edyth, calmly, "I have a joy and peace that I cannot express."

"Edyth Wilsey, if you will pardon my candor,

I must say that if you are not a fool it would take a chemical test to prove it, and I myself feel like one to have emptied out my heart to you. I might have known that all I would get would be material for a tract. I will bid you good night."

Eleanor trailed into her own room with positive hatred for Edyth springing up within her miserable soul. Hate is a plant that grows like the gourd, but takes root like the oak, and maintains a perennial freshness like the evergreen. It withers not except at the lightning-like touch of divine love.

"I wonder that I ever admired her fair, insipid face and soft, catlike ways," Eleanor said to herself. "How dare she preach to me!"

Long after Edyth had dropped into calm and dreamless sleep Eleanor tossed to and fro on her couch, her mind ravaged by selfish and unholy desires and purposes, and even when she fell asleep it was only a light doze that brought no refreshing. She was up early, and when Edyth entered the breakfast room she stood by a window, dressed for the street, reading the "personals" in a New York daily. She greeted

Edyth with scant courtesy, and proceeded to tear off the page of advertising matter she had been skimming, saying carelessly, "A special sale of marked-down silks at Blank & Co.'s to-day. Think I'll run to town and look at them. Besides, I want some new music. Good morning, auntie," as Mrs. Walthope came in, "can I do any errands for you in town to-day?"

"Why, yes, Eleanor, if you will order a few articles for Miss Wilsey I will be glad."

"Better come along, Edyth," said Eleanor, with a touch of sarcasm in her voice, "you would cut such a swath in that wrapper. It must be delightful to make a prisoner of one's self!"

Mrs. Walthope frowned slightly, but, ignoring the remarks of her niece, addressed herself to Edyth: "Will you suggest as to quality and color of dress goods?"

"Since you are so kind," said Edyth, with reluctance, "as to purpose to get me a gown, I will leave the quality to you. As to the color, what do you think of a navy blue?"

"Serviceable and becoming," replied her kind friend. "Eleanor, suppose you select a soft, medium-weight serge, and bring it with you,

and I will get Miss Prince to make it up at once."

Eleanor assented with a most indifferent air, finished her coffee, and excused herself, walking listlessly from the room. When she had reached her own bedchamber a change came over her. She fastened the door, clapped her hands softly, and pirouetted from one end of the apartment to the other. Then she drew the page of newspaper from her pocket, and pored over a few lines before cutting them out. This is what she read with devouring eyes: "Two Thousand Dollars Cash Reward for information that will lead to the recovery of a fair, slender young lady who has been missing from her home since Thursday night. Call at —— Broadway."

"She ought to be at home where she belongs," said Eleanor to herself, as she hurried into her jacket. "I shall be doing the right thing."

But she would not slacken her grip on her resolve lest she hear a thousand voices shouting "Shame!"

To return to Laurance Wilsey. The telegram that he received the night that Edyth left the house was of such moment that he was occupied

with his business documents far into the night, and overslept the next morning, to obtain which temporary forgetfulness of his troubles, and of the physical pain that was still intense, he took a carefully measured dose of a narcotic. When he set the usual tray of bread and water upon the desk in his private office it was late, and he was surprised to see that the inner door was still closed. He rapped upon it, but receiving no reply repeated the knocking quite vigorously. Still there was silence. He procured a step-ladder, and peered down through the open transom, only to see that the couch was unrumpled and that the floor was strewn with clothing. He observed that the door of the private stairway was closed as usual, but instinctively he put his hand into his waistcoat pocket for the secret key, and missed it for the first time. His daughter had evidently made her escape during the night by the concealed steps to the street. Could there have been collusion with the servants? He dismissed the idea at once. Only one of them, the new Swedish maid, had visited the rooms, and he had always admitted her himself, and made sure that there was no attempt

at any communication between the two. Mrs. Severax had asked to be excused to visit a sick relative for a day or so, and could not be suspected of any complicity in the affair. He perceived that his daughter must have obtained possession of the key that he had lost, but even if she had found it how had she known what to do with it?

He was livid with anger. He would have her back in his power if it took his last penny. She should suffer for this evasion of his will until her head should lie in the dust at his feet. Incapable of genuine love for the girl, the pride he took in her and the ambition he cherished for her now turned into overpowering hatred and a desire for revenge. Certain extensive financial interests would be trembling in the balance that day, but he would not attend to business until he had taken steps to recover the runaway and grind her will into unanswering submission. Even in his fury he remembered that she had no hat nor cloak nor dark gown among the supply of clothing that he had allowed her to select from her wardrobe. She could not have gone far in her white gown and thin slippers that

snowy night. Probably her first thought would be of the Dudleys, who doubtless had taken her in, and then she would borrow some of Serene's clothes and make her way to the West woman at Sunnyslope.

He congratulated himself on his shrewdness, ordered his coupé, and proceeded to the Dudley residence, where he asked for Mrs. Dudley. He was sure as soon as he saw that lady that she knew nothing of Edyth, and so ventured to inquire if she were there, stating in explanation that Edyth had started out for a walk downtown that morning, expecting to call for Serene, and he had thought perhaps to intercept her, as he was suddenly obliged to run up to Albany and would like to take both of the girls with him for a little jaunt. Mrs. Dudley said that Edyth had not been there, and Serene was confined to her room by a severe attack of influenza.

This information was somewhat disconcerting to Mr. Wilsey's confidence in his ability as a detective. He took immediate leave and drove to a private detective bureau, where he was in close conference with the chief for half an hour. This man suggested that the young lady would

of course hire a cab, dressed as she must have been so unsuitably for the street, and that she must have taken shelter with friends.

"But she had no friends in town," said her father, "except those whom I have already seen."

"However, we can tackle all the cabbies in town," said the detective.

"And also guard the New Haven waiting room in the Grand Central station," said Mr. Wilsey. "She might venture to a friend in Massachusetts."

Among the second lot of cab-drivers interviewed was the one who had taken Edyth to the Daytons, but he had gotten so jubilantly intoxicated on the extra fare that he could not tell "fur the life uv him" where he drove the night before, although "shure it was a side strate, whither aist or wist he'd be blest if he knew, an' she wuz a swate-spoken young craythur in a quare coat an' bunnit."

An advertisement was put in at a newspaper office, and Laurance Wilsey turned his attention to business for a few hours. He was threatened with large losses, and his head was racked with

neuralgia, and nothing but the desire of revenge supported him. When he returned home at evening there was no news from the missing one, and all night long he walked the floor of the library, smoking one cigar after another, and revolving possible plans for her discovery and return. He finally threw himself on the divan and obtained a fitful sleep, waking to listen for the paper boy, and going himself down to the basement to get the sheet damp from the press. He read and reread his advertisement with much satisfaction, and after a light breakfast proceeded to the detective's office. There was no news.

"It is too early yet to get any result from that ad.," said the detective, "but I am sure that you will hear from it before noon."

Mr. Wilsey went on down to Wall Street, and almost forgot his domestic cyclone in the tornado that was swirling in the financial world. About eleven o'clock Eleanor Lee, haughty as a princess, and treacherous to the core, opened the door of the detective's office and approached the desk with as much composure as if she were on an errand of mercy. She reported that if the

missing young woman advertised in a certain daily were Miss Wilsey she was even then stopping with a Mrs. Walthope at Silver Birch.

"We will go out there at once," said the man, "but can you tell us how we may get access to the young lady?"

Eleanor thought a moment. "I will try to induce her to take a sleigh ride with me at two-thirty," she said. "If I fail you must arrange a better plan. I will have a bow of red ribbon tied in the center of the dashboard."

Accustomed as was the detective to human nature at its shrewdest, meanest, and wickedest, he was aghast at the action of this stranger. Something of his contempt for her looked out from his eyes and crowded into his voice as he said, "We will depend on you, miss. Drive around by the railway station. When the runaway is safe in her father's possession you may call on me for the reward."

Eleanor was stung by his expression and tone. "I feel that I am doing a praiseworthy action," said she. "Miss Wilsey is not of age. She has a kind and generous father. She should stay quietly in her home and obey him."

"Ah, then we are to understand that you act purely on high moral grounds," said the chief, "and that you repudiate any reward for your valuable services."

Eleanor seemed to see the two thousand dollars slipping from her eager grasp. The office furniture appeared to whirl around her. She steadied herself with one hand on the doorknob, and said huskily:

"No, I shall claim the money."

"Well, it takes all sorts to make up a world," said the detective aloud to himself as the door closed behind her.

Eleanor hated Edyth, but she hated herself still more. She had showed herself capable of a despicable action. She had committed a crime against her own self-respect, and had become a sister to traitors in all ages. But the money, the money! How much it meant to her of luxury and travel and conquest and love and social advantage! She stifled her outraged conscience with thoughts of the Mediterranean trip, now an assured delight in all probability. She stopped in at a department store, and selected the dress goods for Edyth and the neces-

sary findings. Then she returned to her aunt's home in time for the one o'clock luncheon. She was very gay at the table, almost hilarious, and particularly kind and attentive in her bearing toward Edyth.

"Auntie," she said, as the meal progressed, "cannot we bundle up this refugee of ours, and get her out for a ride in the double sleigh? It would do her lots of good, and yourself too."

"I can't go," replied Mrs. Walthope, "as I have to attend a managers' meeting in town, but you may have the cutter and drive. Will you trust Eleanor's horsemanship, Miss Wilsey? She's a little inclined to be reckless."

"Do you think it is safe for me to be seen?" questioned Edyth. "I am more afraid of being captured than I am of Eleanor's driving."

"I think you will run no risk, my dear, in this place, especially if you are well veiled."

Edyth was longing for the crisp, stimulating, outdoor air, and was quite willing to be persuaded to get ready for the drive. Eleanor had a flaming spot on each cheek, and her voice was unnaturally high, but no one remarked her nervous manner. It was just about half past

two when they left the house and drove down the avenue at a spirited rate.

"This is delicious!" said poor Edyth, taking deep breaths of the bracing air.

They drove toward the station, and Eleanor observed a coach containing two gentlemen fall in behind them. She headed her horse toward a somewhat unfrequented drive that led through a long stretch of woods, and having gone about a mile, she stopped the animal, and said to her companion:

"I want to see if there are any bittersweet berries left on the old stone wall just beyond those evergreens. There were bushels of it there last month. If you will kindly hold Prancer I will plod over there with my basket and scissors. I want to paint a panel of it for a Christmas gift."

Eleanor had worn her rubber boots, and enjoyed wading through the snow. She was soon out of sight beyond the thick, tangled bushes and low-growing tree branches. The coach, that had kept the cutter in sight all the way, now caught up to it. The road was not wide enough for the coach to pass, and Edyth called to Elea-

nor to return, but the latter seemed to have lost her hearing. The driver uttered some exclamation of annoyance, but Edyth felt no fear until the coach door opened and two men in citizens' clothes approached her. Evidently they did not enjoy their errand. The foremost spoke respectfully and even kindly. He said:

"Miss Wilsey, we are obliged to ask you to go with us. We represent your father. It will be useless for you to object or resist. If you will come quietly with us we will treat you with courtesy, and set you down at the door of your home."

As the man spoke Edyth saw a detective's badge, which he took pains to reveal on the breast of his inner coat. She stepped down from the sleigh, and then said quietly:

"Please call my friend. She will be alarmed if she returns and does not see me. Besides, some harm might come to the horse, who does not stand well to-day."

At the halloo of one of the men Eleanor came running in time to see a stranger holding her aunt's horse, while Edyth was being assisted into the coach by the other man.

"What does this mean?" she cried, with fine show of affright and indignation.

"Edyth, dear," she called, rushing to the door of the carriage, "what is it?"

"Don't worry, Mel," replied Edyth. "My father's agents have gotten on my track, and will take me back to him. Give my love to your aunt, and tell her that I hope sometime to thank her in person for her goodness."

Eleanor stepped into the cutter and took the lines from the hand of the detective. He peered into her face as she received them.

"Well!" said she, tersely.

"I was only thinkin'," said the man, "that the race of Judas ain't all run out yet!"

Eleanor's horse leaped forward under an unnecessary lash of the whip, and she drove furiously on to the next village before she turned toward home. The coach retraced its way to the highway that led to the city, and in the early twilight of the short winter day Edyth was escorted up the steps of her home, and only left at the door when it was opened by Laurance Wilsey himself, who took his daughter by the arm with no gentle grip, and half carried her

into the library. He thrust her into a chair, and bent over her, his hands in his pockets, while he stared down at her with malignant triumph on every feature.

"If you had gone to hell," he hissed, "I would have found you and brought you back."

Involuntarily, Edyth closed her eyes to shut out the sight of his cruel, passion-distorted face. She almost felt that he might kill her. He arose to his full, towering height, and turned to pace the room in his usual fashion. He was so enraged that he could not utter the scathing words that rushed to his lips. At length he gained some mastery over the physical effects of his wrath, and took a chair directly in front of Edyth. He was rejoiced to see that she shrank from him.

The drive home had been fraught with intense mental agitation for Edyth. Somehow, God did not seem quite so real to her, now that she was being carried back a prisoner, as he did a few nights before when she found the key and made her escape so marvelously. She had believed that the whole matter of the key was of him in answer to prayer; but if so, then why

had her father been allowed to regain possession of her? Why had not God preserved her from detection and capture? It had been easy to trust him when she lay so quietly and securely in Jeanie Campbell's white, sweet guest-chamber, or while she conversed with Mrs. Walthope in her comfortable out-of-town home; but matters looked different now. Edyth's spiritual life was yet a tender plant, and it was no wonder that her faith swayed and bent for a little under the powerful breath of the enemy. The old temptation that she thought was entirely banished and outlived now swept down upon her in her weariness and disappointment. Surely she had done her best to maintain her loyalty to Christ, but of what avail had been the painful opposition to her father? Perhaps she had made a mistake in running away, and yet she had been so sure at the time that God made the way for her to escape. She felt perplexed and depressed. Just then the words of Jesus to Peter, that Mr. Campbell had read and commented upon at family devotions on Friday morning, shone in upon her darkness: "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you

as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." She could see now just where she stood, exposed by circumstances to the attack of a subtle and determined foe, who was endeavoring to undermine the foundations of her confidence and strength by instilling these doubts into her mind. On the other hand, she was assured that the mountains of trouble were full of horses and chariots of defense and deliverance. By the time the coach had reached her home her soul had regained its deep, fearless, blissful calm in God the Rock of her salvation.

"I will take you into my confidence," said Mr. Wilsey. "I will not insist upon your remaining in this hovel that I provided for you. I have arranged for a more desirable residence for you. We shall leave here to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. You will have nothing to do in your new home but to meditate on the past, present, and future, with no interruptions except such as come from the sight and sound of persons more unbalanced than yourself. You will not need any of your Paris gowns. The most fashionable and popular garment of the

place is a jaunty little jacket that will be provided for you. You may leave your ornaments at home. No jewelry is worn there except bracelets, which are furnished by the host, and good of their kind. You will observe some difference in the food from that on my meager board. The place may seem a trifle monotonous, and there will be slight difficulties in the way of leaving it, as it is so well defended from burglars that the bolts and bars sometimes interfere with the liberties of the inmates. You will have a key, however, that will at any time allow you to take your departure. The key is a word of three letters, 'Y-e-s,' and when you are entirely ready to conform to my ways and my will that word, when it meets my eyes, will bring you back."

Edyth had listened as one in a dream. She knew that the horrible prospect had not been exaggerated by her father, and yet his statements did not disturb her in the least. She was listening to other words, spoken to her mind and heart. It was the same blessed refrain that had sung itself to her the night of her escape: "Thy God is able to deliver thee."

Her father paused to watch the effect of his threatening, but she sat with her eyes shut, evidently unmoved. Enraged at her composure, and moved by a brutal impulse, he struck her with his palm full on the side of the cheek. She opened her eyes then, but there was no anger, only divine pity in their clear depths, and his soul cowered before them. "You may go to your old rooms," he said, gruffly. "I mean your own, up stairs." Edyth was glad to have an opportunity to spend another night in the daintily appointed suite that had so perfectly expressed her personal tastes.

Her father followed her up the staircase, and locked her in, but she did not mind the confinement. She was glad to kneel unobserved and thank God for his sustaining arm and his glorious promise of guidance and succor. When a tray of palatable food was brought to the door she was busily engaged in sorting her clothing, and deciding what to pack for the morrow. She fully expected to go forth never to return.

That night Laurance Wilsey's soul was required of him. With his nerves starving for sleep and unable to obtain it, he poured out a

dose of his favorite cordial, dropping in an anodyne with a less steady hand than usual. Sleep came surely, but it was a sleep that before the next noon had set the whole house into a solemn and awful commotion. Edyth, who awoke late, was surprised at the stillness, and also wondered as the hours dragged by that no one came with her breakfast. It was nearly twelve o'clock when she heard a stir in the hall near her door. Her father's sleeping room was opposite to hers. The housekeeper was holding a conversation with the butler at her father's door.

"Knock again," Edyth heard her say. "Don't be afraid of making a noise. Mr. Wilsey is an early riser usually."

Edyth called through the keyhole of her own door, hoping to catch the ear of the housekeeper, "Mallison, Mallison!"

Mrs. Mallison started at the sound.

"Please turn the key in this door," cried Edyth.

"Well, there's a strange state of things in this house," said the housekeeper, "and no mistake. I wish I was well out of it, indeed I do!"

A moment more, and Edyth was released and stood on the threshold of her room, saying, "What is the matter?"

"It's your father, miss," said the butler, bowing respectfully. "He ain't put in no happearance this mornin', miss."

"Is it late?"

"It's near 'igh noon, miss."

Edyth stepped forward and rapped on the closed door, but there was no reply. She tried the knob gently, and the door opened slightly.

"Now call him, Jarvis," she said to the butler.

"Mr. Wilsey, sir!" said the butler, in his heavy tone.

As there was no response Edyth asked the man to enter the room and see if his master were ill. Jarvis tiptoed across the sill, and advanced silently to the bedside. Edyth followed him at a little distance. The butler bent over the rigid form.

"He don't seem to be breathin', miss!" he said, in an awe-struck whisper.

Edyth went to a window, pulled aside the draperies, and gave the shade a pull that sent it suddenly up to the top of the casement. Then

she stepped to the bed, gave one swift look at the sleeper, and sank on her knees with her face buried in her hands. Even to her inexperienced eyes there was no mistaking the terrible fact. Laurance Wilsey, lying with clenched, motionless hands, and with the sin and selfishness and hatred of his soul stamped by the seal of death on his features, was an object too terrible to contemplate.

"Shall I get the doctor, miss?" said the butler, gently.

"Yes," said Edyth, "immediately, although I am sure it is too late."

She could not bear to stay in that presence, and closing the door behind her, sat down near it in the hall.

"Where is Mrs. Severax?" she asked of the housekeeper.

"Been gone on a visit since Thursday morning," replied Mrs. Mallison.

The maids were whispering together at the far end of the hall. Edyth was too dazed to realize the situation, but she felt that she must have some one with her besides servants, and when the butler returned she sent him with two mes-

sages to the telegraph office. One was to the Rev. Charles Dayton, and the other to Miss Helen West. They read alike: "My father is dead. Come to me."

The physician soon arrived. He told Edyth a half hour later that her father had doubtless been the victim of an unsuspected heart trouble.

Until Mr. Dayton came that afternoon Edyth was in great agony of mind. She feared that her resistance to her father's will, and the intense excitement he had labored under during her absence, had been the cause of his death. When Mr. Dayton's card was brought up to her she went down to the library to meet him, and told him amid her sobs of the burden that lay upon her.

"Miss Wilsey," said he, "have you done just as nearly right as you knew?"

"Yes, Mr. Dayton, I certainly have."

"Then can you not leave all the results with God?"

"I think I can," she replied, "but O, it is so dreadful if I hastened my father out of the world!"

"But that is the very point I wish you to

abandon entirely," said he. "Your father's own violent anger was doubtless the means of aggravating his heart difficulty to the fatal point. That your course aroused that anger is not saying by any means that your position was a wrong one."

She grew calmer as he talked with her, and when he left her after a few comforting words of prayer it was with the promise that he would send his wife to stay that night. Edyth sent the minister home in the coupé, and insisted on having Mrs. Dayton return in it, even though she had to bring the baby. The library had become a place of unspeakably painful memories, so it was in her own little sitting room that she received Mrs. Dayton and her two-year-old Katy. They talked long over the fire, while Katy slept on the couch, and both looked forward to the morrow, knowing that it would probably bring Helen West. Mrs. Dayton then told Edyth for the first time of Helen's pathetic love story, and Edyth for a time forgot the tragedy in her own home as she listened to the romance of the brilliant young missionary and the lost ship.

"Dear, brave, lonely Aunt Helen!" she said. "We will be everything to each other now!"

Mrs. Dudley came the next morning, nervous and tearful, with offers of any service she could render. Mrs. Walthope, too, appeared on the scene. They had both read the death notice in the morning paper. Edyth inquired for Eleanor, but found that she had left that very day by the first express for Baltimore. Eleanor had announced to her aunt her intention of taking that train, but even while Mrs. Walthope talked with Edyth, Eleanor was leaving the detective's office with her ill-gotten treasure.

Edyth's callers had gone home, when a carriage stopped at the house, and from a front window Edyth saw the calm, beautiful, loving face of her aunt. She ran down the long stairs, brushed against the amazed butler, who thought that she was surely becoming crazed with grief, and opened the door herself for the beloved one. It was a memorable meeting.

"We will never, never get talked out!" said Edyth, an hour or two later, as she sat on an ottoman at her aunt's feet in the guest-chamber.

"It is very sweet to be together, even under

such sad circumstances," said Miss West. "I have almost a guilty feeling, however, as if we were meeting secretly for fear of your father's displeasure."

But that cold, silent form in the drawing-room was impotent now for good or ill. He had been the servant of Mammon for many years, yet he lay at last with empty hands, powerless to control a farthing of his earthly gains, with no account in the bank of heaven, and naught to show for the opportunity of life but the hard-earned wage—death; a pitiable reward to a slave for his toil beneath the lash of an unmerciful master.

CHAPTER X

Mr. Wilsey's funeral, in accordance with Edyth's wishes, was entirely private. A succession of cold, snowy days followed, and Edyth would have been glad to spend them in quiet interchange of confidence and in sweet communion with her Aunt Helen; but business matters intruded and clamored for attention. The will had been lodged in a box in a safe-deposit vault with the knowledge of Mr. Wilsey's lawyers, and on being produced disclosed the fact that Edyth was heir to a large estate consisting principally of valuable mining and railroad stocks and government bonds, besides the new home and several other pieces of real estate of great value. The will was dated on the day before Mr. Wilsey and his daughter had moved into their mansion on the Park, and as Edyth was then under age she was permitted to choose a guardian subject to the approval of the law firm who conducted her father's business. Happily, these gentlemen were not at variance with her choice of the Rev. Charles Dayton. Edyth

was surprised that her father had not disinherited her, but the fact was he expected to reduce her to obedience in a short time in the surroundings that he had planned for her, and so had not resorted to the final threat of depriving her of any share of his fortune.

One evening, when Mr. and Mrs. Dayton had been taking dinner with Miss West and Edyth, Mr. Dayton said, as they sat in the drawing-room together:

"Miss Wilsey, now that your father has passed out from your life, and you are virtually your own mistress, may I ask if you have any plans for the future?"

"My first thought," said Edyth, as she held the hand of her aunt, who sat beside her on a sofa, "is that Aunt Helen must remain with me. As for any definite purpose in life, I am thankful that I have one, as clear as a sunbeam. Perhaps this is a good opportunity to tell you all about it. That is one thing I have kept to myself, dear," she said, smilingly, to Miss West. "I have had a 'call,' as you ministers say, to a beautiful work, a call from the edge of the grave, that roused me from my timidity and

hesitation toward Christ to a positive declaration of love and loyalty."

Then Edyth told them the story of Charlotte Henson, and repeated her dying message, "There are lots of girls like me."

"That is my commission," said Edyth, "for it was Christ who spoke to my very soul through those poor, pale lips. I have not yet thought out just the course to pursue, but I want to lay all that I have at the feet of the Master. Of one thing I am certain. He would not have me live in a palace afar from the 'girls.' I have no love for this house, where I have suffered so terribly. My plan is to take Aunt Helen, if she will consent, and go among those whom I would help. I shall depend on you all for advice."

The Daytons and Miss West were deeply moved by the story of the sewing girl, as well as by Edyth's enthusiastic and definite purpose, and now that she had outlined her future there was no lack of suggestive material for conversation.

Mrs. Dudley heard of a family just returned from abroad who were looking for a suitable

furnished house, and Edyth, having disposed of several pictures and much bric-a-brac, stored such articles as she wished to retain for herself, and rented her home at figures that would have secured her an ample income even with no other resources. She then took rooms in a hotel for Miss West and herself until she could select just the right location in which to work out her cherished scheme. Just before the holidays she accompanied her aunt to Sunnyslope, where the latter completed her arrangements for leaving the place indefinitely. The family in the homestead were willing to remain there, and Helen's two rooms were to be at her disposal at any time. Edyth was intensely interested in these few days spent in her mother's old home. Her aunt and herself never ceased to wonder at the strange leadings of Providence that had brought them together. Miss West threw her whole heart into Edyth's plans, although her own peaceful life was to be entirely revolutionized and her refined tastes sacrificed to the cause.

Edyth had parted from the Dudleys without confiding her purposes to them, so that no one

but the Daytons and Miss West knew what had become of her. The incident of her father's death caused but a ripple on the social sea, where the Wilseys had made but a brief appearance. Edyth met Kylmer Van Ross on Broadway one day, but vouchsafed no look of recognition, and passed by him with renewed gratitude that she had been spared so wretched an alliance. With Miss West she made numerous observation tours downtown and over on the East Side of the city, and finally secured on a side street the second floor of a house that had once been a fashionable mansion, and that still retained evidences of its former estate in its brownstone trimmings and some fine old carvings, marble mantels, and high ceilings. Who can observe the decay of a once splendid family residence without feelings of pain akin to that with which we look upon the wrinkled visage, bowed form, and mean attire, and listen to the cracked, piping voice of a woman who was once the lovely and adored prima donna of a past generation, now dying in poverty and neglect? Such are the changes in our great cities that many a man or woman now a little past middle life,

if they revisit the scenes of their happy childhood, find the once quiet streets swarming with gamin, and littered with barrels of refuse. Dishéveled heads and swarthy, foreign-looking faces protrude from window casements, the air reeks with vile odors and is vocal with strange gibberish, while open doorways on either side reveal discolored walls and dilapidated staircases, so completely has many a lovely old neighborhood been swept over and wrecked by the great, swelling tides of immigration, the original denizens fleeing before them for sweetness and peace.

The house selected by Miss West and Edyth for their experiment was a corner one, occupied in the basement front as a German grocery, the proprietor living in the rear rooms with his numerous family. What had originally been the parlor floor was subdivided into several small rents and was let to a Hebrew tailor, a teacher of the accordion, a fortune-teller, and a dealer in third-hand sewing machines. All kept house in their one room; some had children and dogs and cats, others took boarders. The atmosphere was laden with the mingled odors of tobacco, sauerkraut, fried pork, and unwashed humanity.

For blocks around, the houses were in similar condition, and Edyth had special reasons for choosing this one, aside from the possibilities of comfort that lurked in the upper rooms. The house was not far from one where she had applied for employment as a dressmaker's assistant. It was also in the vicinity of a mission chapel established by an uptown church. Edyth had enjoyed furnishing the magnificent house on the Park, where she had expected to spend many happy years, but her pleasure then was nothing in comparison to the delight that she now experienced in evolving cleanliness and beauty from the almost hopeless conditions at hand. Miss West and herself had interviewed the burly agent in his den hard by, and had been obliged to explain that they wished to obtain the rooms for purposes philanthropic, for he evidently found it difficult to understand why two such persons could wish to settle in that locality. They received his permission to make numerous improvements in the line of paint and paper at their own expense, and he even consented to considerable carpenter work and plumbing on the same terms. It was difficult

for Edyth to play the rôle of the poor but neat person.

"There is one thing that we can revel in without displaying our lack of poverty," she remarked to her aunt. "We can be extravagantly, luxuriously, gloriously clean!"

"You forget, dear," replied Miss West, "that even cleanliness is a luxury beyond the reach of the very poor. Soap is expensive, and even water must in many houses be carried up and down long flights of stairs."

With the exception of the front alcove room, the large old apartments on the second floor had never been partitioned off, and though connecting doors had been nailed up, they had not been removed and the spaces walled in as is sometimes the case. The rooms had never been subjected to such an overhauling as they received at the hands of workmen under Edyth's supervision. They were fumigated and scraped and polished, the woodwork refreshed with two coats of glistening cream-white paint, and the walls hung with the daintiest of wall papers. Broken panes were replaced in the broad windows, and as the house was on a corner, with a

south and west exposure, the rooms had all the sunlight they could hold.

"Now to furnish plainly enough, auntie," said Edyth, "is a problem."

They went on numerous shopping expeditions to some of the downtown department stores, and selected mattings and small ingrain rugs for the floors. The windows were hung with simple muslin curtains, not too fine, but immaculate in their whiteness. They bought a cottage organ, a carpet-covered lounge, a cheap bookcase, and a large stove for the front room, but fell beneath their high ideals of destitution by adding two very comfortable high-backed rockers. The two little beds for the sleeping room which they were to share together were fitted with the most comfortable of mattresses and the nicest of linen.

"That can't affect the scheme," said Edyth.

"And it will affect us," said her aunt, "and help us to be more useful in the daytime, by giving us better rest at night."

They offset the hidden luxuriousness of the beds, however, by the purchase of a conspicuously cheap bureau of ash, with a small mirror

that would have distorted the features of even Helen of Troy, and with handles that were always coming off.

"That bureau can be set down against the sum total of all our extravagances during our mortal career," said Edyth, "and we will be clear."

We will not follow all their effective devices for giving a homelike air to their temporary quarters. Helen particularly rejoiced in a lavish display of beautiful potted plants, and started a glossy green ivy on a journey up one of the window casings. When the bookcase was filled with favorites, and a few neatly framed photographs hung on the walls, and a canary trilled in his cage over Helen's pretty worktable, it was not difficult for our two friends to feel that they could be content for a season even amid such sounds as arose from the motley crowd below.

"It suggests what Noah's household must have endured in the ark, doesn't it?" said Edyth one day when they were getting settled. "It is hard for you, auntie, dear; but it was so lovely of you to consent to come here with me, for, of course, I could never have attempted it alone."

"But perhaps," said Miss West, with a beautiful light in her eyes, "perhaps I had a 'call' too!"

Not many doors away, around a corner, was a dressmaking establishment patronized mostly by the wives of saloon-keepers and by young women out at service. Edyth had been attracted by the sign in a front window, and had rung and asked for "Madam Henebry." The madam, who had bleached hair, small, suspicious eyes, and a coarse mouth, appeared in the shabby, stuffy little parlor, and scrutinized her visitor closely, through a lorgnette that she had picked up once on the floor of a theater. The glasses were not suited to her eyes, but that fact did not detract from her impressiveness. There was something formidable in her natural appearance, and as she handled it the innocent lorgnette had all the moral effects of a bludgeon. Edyth was attired in a cheap, dark blue cashmere, a coarse black jacket of the style of two seasons previous, and a turban of velveteen with a bow of black ribbon. Her commonplace attire did not completely conceal her fine figure, and made her erect and graceful bearing still more

noticeable. Madam took her at first for a new customer, and wore a gracious smile that faded into a look of doubt and surprise as Edyth asked if there was an opportunity for her to assist in the workroom. The madam asked a few questions: where did she live and with whom, and could she sew well? Then, leaving the room, she returned with a bit of hemming for Edyth to do. Next she brought a waist for overcasting, then a buttonhole to be worked. Edyth had always enjoyed using her needle, and the madam looked on admiringly as the white, deft fingers swiftly and neatly fulfilled their task.

"You'll do!" she said, bluntly. "I'll have a vacancy one week from to-day."

Thus it was that on a stormy January morning Edyth made her first appearance in Madam Henebry's workroom. Nearly a doxen girls had rived before her, and were trying to limber their benumbed fingers in the faint, unfriendly warmth from an ill-smelling oil stove. The original partition had been removed from between the two rooms on the second floor, thus throwing them into one long, narrow apartment. It was a cheerless place, for the rear

windows were darkened by the solid side wall of a tenement house. The green paper shades were rolled loosely to the tops of the windows and tied with tapes. The ceiling was low, rough, and smoke-stained. The walls were hung with dressmakers' charts and paper patterns. The dingy carpet was worn to holes in places. The air was heavy and foul, and it was evident that no windows had been open since the day previous. Edyth paused on the doorsill as she came from the hall room that did duty as a receptacle for hats and wraps. The group of girls caught sight of her, nudged each other, whispered, and giggled. The madam never troubled herself to introduce a new girl to the others. Edyth's gown was that same cheap blue cashmere, but there was a neat white linen collar in the neck, and she wore also a plain but snowy little lawn apron. Just before she left home, when she and her Aunt Helen arose from their knees after asking the Father's blessing on the new venture, Miss West picked a splendid Lady Washington geranium bloom, and pinned the pink cluster on Edyth's waist. This caught the eyes of the girls. As Edyth took the wooden

chair that the madam assigned to her the whisperers gathered strength, and one tall, black-eyed girl, who wore soiled ribbons and siderable cheap jewelry, said audibly:

"O, say, girls, ain't I jest stunnin', I am! Guess he must drive a wagon fer a flower shop, hey?"

Edyth expected coarseness and insult, and was not disturbed by the remarks that were made while she took directions from her employer about the facings for a gorgeously flowered silk waist. Edyth sat in Kathie Brent's chair. Kathie had just been dismissed on account of her racking cough. She was a shy, silent creature, not at all companionable. The girls hated her great, mournful blue eyes and long, bony fingers, and her cough had annoyed them. No one wondered now that she was gone what would become of her. The girls who shivered all winter and drooped all summer in Madam Henebry's dismal workroom were to their task-mistress only so many animated contrivances for turning off work. If one went, some other came. Whether they went silent and white on a long journey, or recklessly plunged into the

life of the music halls and beer gardens, it mattered not to her, so long as there were other hands to ply her needles and other feet to work the treadles of her sewing-machines. This new girl was different from any who had ever sat among them. Her fresh, fair face, her erect figure, her simplicity of attire and perfect neatness, were a revelation to the half-starved, half-washed, tawdry creatures who made their bold comments upon her, the while they shook out their work and looked for stray thimbles and scissors. Edyth sewed swiftly and well, and gave an occasional keen, unobserved glance at the others. A great love and longing filled her soul. There were eight girls bent over the little heaps of silk and cashmere and dress linings. They had found another subject of conversation by this time, for the madam had just announced that Judy O'Flaherty, the daughter of the proprietor of the next corner grocery, was to be married within a month with great ceremony in St. Bridget's, on the adjoining block, and the entire trousseau was to be prepared at madam's establishment. Even the madam's grim countenance relaxed somewhat at this rise in her

prosperities, and her stern hand loosened a little, so that the girls knew that they might chat freely for a season, a privilege not always granted.

"Uv course it's white she'll be married in, mum?" interrogated Maggie Flynn of the madam, who nodded graciously, adding with a relish, "Satin!"

"To think of it!" said the black-eyed girl, who went by the name of "Snap."

"The luck that some folks has!" sighed Lillie Riggs. She had a rather delicate, small-featured face, and a head of frowsy auburn hair. She usually brought a sensational story paper along with her luncheon, and wore a gilt ring with a glass solitaire on her engagement finger. She had bought the ring herself for twenty-five cents.

"Maggie, I dast you to ask the madam ef there's goin' to be a toor?" whispered Ann Ferris.

"I'll not be dared, girls. It ain't fair. I asked about the dress."

"Go on yourself, Ann!" said several smothered voices.

So Ann, venturing on the madam's unusual suavity, piped out shrilly with a high flush and a quickened heart-beat, "Please, ma'am, be they goin' a-travelin'?"

"Niagara!" replied madam, sententiously.

"Ah—h!" came in an awe-stricken chorus.

"Jest like Astors and Vanderbilts!" exclaimed Snap.

"Now, see here, girls," said Amanda Raff, whose face showed considerable good, practical sense, "wouldn't you rather never see Niaggery than to hev to take it along with Franz Gunther's Jim?"

Franz Gunther was the ward "boss," and his oldest son, the coming bridegroom, was not in the highest repute in the neighborhood for good looks, sobriety, nor honesty.

While this chatter had been going on one of the girls had edged her chair quite near to Edyth. She had a pale, pinched face and a tired, discouraged air, but she was much neater than the others in her dress. Her bodice was free from grease-spots, her hair was smooth, and her finger nails were clean. She made no attempt at ornament of any sort. Edyth saw that

her eyes were more than once fixed hungrily on the Lady Washington geranium, and she detached it from her dress and laid it on the girl's knee. The wan face lighted up as if a beam of sunshine had fallen athwart it.

"O, thank you!" was the low response. "Before my par died we had a little home of our own in the country, and them flowers grew in a mound in the front yard. I'll take it home to mar."

She lifted it to her lips, and then pinned it on her bosom.

"What is your name?" said Edyth.

"Ellen Lester," said the girl, resuming her needle.

While the other girls chatted and laughed Edyth drew from Ellen the story of her family's misfortunes, and made a mental note of her street and number. The madam, who had left the room as mild as a June morning, now returned like a stormy November night, gloomy, stinging, and furious. Mrs. Matthias Zimmermann had brought back her green cloth suit for extensive alterations. Each girl in turn was blamed for some part of the difficulty. The

merry talk suddenly subsided. Madam stamped and roared like a wild animal. The girls seemed to shrink within themselves. Madam wished to punish them in some way. She would deprive them of their usual privilege of steeping a pot of tea at noon on the stove. Few of them were in the habit of going home at noon, and in bad weather all remained. There was but half an hour's intermission at the best. To-day there would be only fifteen minutes. When the clock struck twelve the madam went below for her own luncheon. "Snap" arose and shook her fist at the closed door.

"You old she-dragon!" she muttered.

"Let's stab her with the scissors!" said Ann Ferris, brandishing a pair like a mock-tragedy queen.

"And put out her eyes!" said Maggie Flynn, waving a bodkin.

"It was her own blunder," cried Lizzie McCrea, "an' she a-layin' it onto us girls!"

Ellen Lester burst into tears.

"'Bye, Baby Bunting, Papa's gone a-hunting,'" called out a mocking voice.

"Girls," said Edyth, "may I open a window?"

"Ain't we got enough to bear without bein' froze to death?" cried Snap, viciously.

"But this air is poisonous," said Edyth. "We will all have headache this afternoon."

"Well, if you don't like it, lump it!" replied Molly Delaney. "It was all right till you come."

"But it ain't all right," said Amanda Raff, espousing Edyth's just cause. "You girls don't know the difference between a dead fish an' a live one."

"Well, we know sass when we hear it, don't we, girls?" said Snap, picking up a pincushion and flinging it at Amanda's head, which it missed and hit Edyth full on the cheek, inflicting several painful punctures and drawing blood. Snap waited a second, instinctively half-shielding her head with her arm, expecting the immediate return of the missile, but to her surprise Edyth quietly took a handkerchief and wiped off the side of her face, then picked up the cushion and replaced it on the table.

"Shame, shame!" cried some of the girls to Snap.

"I didn't mean it fer her!" she said, sullenly.

"I'm sure you would not wish to hurt me nor anyone," said Edyth, kindly.

"Yes, I would," declared Snap. "I'd like to smash the whole world."

Then by a curious contradiction she sank down on the floor, threw her black cotton apron over her head, and cried like a baby.

"We haven't but ten minutes left fer a bite of something to eat," said Maggie Flynn, and the girls flocked after her to the cloakroom, returning with small brown paper parcels.

"Come, Snap, up with you!" said Ann Ferris. "Here, I've brought your lunch in with mine."

Snap dried her eyes on her apron, and took the parcel Ann thrust into her hand. Edyth had provided herself with a couple of sandwiches in order that she might remain and study her new companions. She was horrified at the array of edibles that was produced. Green cucumber pickles enough to set the teeth of the mastodon on edge, cream puffs made with rancid lard, pieces of baker's pie with only a hint of fruit between two layers of unspeakable crust. There was no word of criticism on these dainties from the respective owners, but Edyth

knew how heads and nerves and stomachs would protest, although the girls would not suspect the cause.

"Hurry up with that pie, Lil," called one. "We're waitin' fer that next chapter. I'm just dyin' to know if Lord Manchester marries the nurse girl."

Lillie was in the habit of reading aloud from her favorite papers.

"I can't read, girls, to-day," she said, "without my tea. I'm faint fer it."

"So am I," said Ann. "Ain't it mean, though?"

"Then Maggie must sing," said Lizzie. "Sing that new tune we heard at Blakely's last night."

Edyth shuddered. She had seen that name blazoned in colored lights over a coarse resort on a neighboring avenue. Maggie Flynn was a very pretty girl, with a wealth of burnished brown hair, and a lovely mouth.

"Ain't I missin' my tea as much as any of ye?" she said.

"But, Maggie, alanna," urged Molly, "cheer us up a bit."

So Maggie took her stand at the end of the room, and sang a really musical little ballad with the airs and graces of a public favorite. Her voice was wonderfully sweet and of rare compass. Edyth listened and jotted another fact down in her mental notebook. The madam returned just then in a more amiable mood, having partaken of a hot and palatable meal, including a cup of strong and steaming tea.

It was a trying afternoon. A fog set in early, and the kerosene lamps were lighted. The girls missed their accustomed stimulus, and were suffering from impure air and indigestion. They had several mishaps with their work. Edyth's skillful hand saved Snap and several others from severe reproof from the madam, as well as a cut in their small wages. Ellen Lester fainted before night, and that time when Edyth proposed to open a window for a few moments no one demurred, and all felt the reviving influence of even the damp outdoor air.

Ellen's indisposition gave Edyth a chance to walk home with her at six o'clock. A room in a neighboring tenement house, divided by

calico curtains into a kitchen and two bedrooms, was the home of Mrs. Lester, her daughter Ellen, and her son James, a boy of fourteen, who responded to the call of "Cash!" in a down-town shop. Edyth observed the neatness of the place as she conversed with Mrs. Lester. Mr. Lester had been a mechanic in a New England town. A long illness had exhausted his small savings, a mortgage on the cottage that they had partly bought had been foreclosed, and upon his death there were no near relatives to help them The family had come to New York, and had lived on the edge of starvation ever since. It was a very commonplace story, but its genuine distress touched Edyth's heart. She might not reveal too speedily her ability to help, but she spoke so kindly and hopefully to the sad mother and daughter that somehow their hearts grew lighter. On the way home she stopped at a grocer's and ordered a generous supply of edibles, including some fruit and delicacies, to be sent to the Lesters from "a friend," and, weary though she was in body, she climbed the stairs to her own apartments as if on wings. As she reached the landing Aunt Helen's face

appeared at a narrow opening in the front door, as they called their entrance to the sitting room.

"I was getting uneasy, dear," she said; "you are nearly an hour late."

"I'll tell you all about it," said Edyth. "This has been the longest, the shortest, the most trying, the most blessed, day of my life so far. But first, please give me a plate of soup, for I'm simply ravenous."

After the evening meal was cleared away Edyth lay on the lounge in the firelight, and, holding fast to one of Miss West's hands, described the events of the day.

"I have two definite ideas as the result of this day's experiment," said Edyth, in conclusion. "First, proper food for the girls. Second, to find the girl whose place I have taken, Kathie Brent. Yes, I may add a third, to help the Lesters to better conditions. But, auntie, dear, I haven't asked at all about your day. Have you been very lonely?"

"On the contrary, I have been very busy," said Miss West. "Perhaps I can tell a story."

"How delightful!" said Edyth. "What is it?"

"Well," said Miss West, "you had not been gone very long this morning when I heard a great commotion in the hall overhead, and then on the stairs. There were angry voices of men and the wailing of a woman. I availed myself of our chain bolt and peeped out. Some men were carrying a few pieces of rickety furniture down the stairs, and two others bore a cot bed on which lay an elderly colored woman evidently ill and friendless. I ventured into the hall and inquired what was the matter. One man told me that the woman was behind two months in her rent.

" 'But what is to become of her?' I asked.

" 'Sidewalk,' he answered, savagely. 'She's only playin' 'possum, she is.'

"Whereupon the poor creature on the bed cried in a hoarse whisper, 'O lady, fer de Lawd's sake, help me! I ain't got nobody in all de worl', nobody, nobody.'

"I told the men to carry her back to her room and I would go to the agent and pay the arrears on the rent. They grumbled a good deal, but I gave them each something, and the bed and the poor wrecks of chairs were returned

to a fourth-floor hall bedroom. I found the agent and settled with him, and went for a doctor, who came within an hour. He said that the woman has a very bad cold, but that she needs good food more than anything else. Her name is Clarissy Hallam, she says, and she went out washing and scrubbing until she took ill, but she did not have work enough to provide anything ahead. I have made her comfortable for the present. It was very touching to see her grateful appreciation of the little I had done for her. Somehow I felt as if I were working side by side with the Master to-day; for although all our work is done under his loving eyes, he does not always seem so near to me."

It was just before daylight the next morning that Miss West heard Edyth call softly:

"Aunt Helen!"

"Well, my dear?"

"I've a new scheme. Those girls must be better fed. How would it do to set Mrs. Lester up in a small restaurant near by here, and furnish good, nourishing food for losing prices, and yet charge just enough to make the girls feel independent? It may be that your good old

colored woman, Clarissy What's-her-name, will be excellent help for Mrs. Lester."

"What next, Edyth?" said Miss West.

"But would you not approve, auntie?"

"Certainly, dear. I was only thinking how your path begins to widen. It is good that, unlike the majority of philanthropists, you are not perplexed for means to carry out your plans."

"I haven't told you yet, auntie, of my most cherished plan. It seems almost too beautiful to be practical, and yet it haunts my mind constantly. However, it will keep. The restaurant is the next thing."

Thus it came about that not quite three weeks after this conversation, when the girls at Madam Henebry's were laying aside their work at the stroke of noon, Edyth drew from her pocket a bunch of neat little menu cards, and said with a happy glance at Ellen Lester:

"Girls, I find that Ellen's mother has moved just around the corner, and is willing to serve luncheon and supper at small prices. Suppose we go there to-day instead of trying to eat here. Just read over the list:

" 'Plate of beef soup and a roll, 3 cents.

" 'Cup of tea, coffee, or cocoa, 1 cent.

" 'Poached egg on toast, or boiled egg with rolls and butter, 3 cents.

" 'Roast-beef or chicken sandwich, 4 cents.

" 'Bowl of rich milk with rice, 3 cents.

" 'French hash (special), 1 cent.

" 'One kind of fresh or stewed fruit without extra charge.' "

There were the keenest interest and a buzzing of tongues as Edyth finished reading.

She had obtained considerable influence over her shopmates by her cheerful dignity and unvarying kindness. They were quite incredulous about the new restaurant.

"Yer mar can't make nothin' at that rate," said Snap to Ellen, scornfully.

"She'll make our own table, anyhow, I hope," replied Ellen, "and there's three of us to feed."

"What on earth is 'French hash?' " asked Ann Ferris, studying her card.

"O, you just ought to taste of mother's hash," said Ellen, with gathering courage. "It ain't made out of no plate scrapin's, I can tell you, and it is browned just the loveliest you ever see."

"You see, it's only open from twelve to one, and from six till seven at night," said Edyth, consulting the bill. "Mrs. Lester is not able to serve very many patrons, and if we all go there I imagine we will have it pretty much to ourselves."

"Well, come along," said Snap. "It won't do no hurt to try. I'm half-starved this minute."

The little procession, headed by Edyth and Ellen, made their way around the corner to the first floor front, where Mrs. Lester had laid half a dozen little tables with dainty linen, shining glass, and bright silver. There was a bunch of pink carnations in a clear glass vase in the center of each table. The floor was covered by neat linoleum enlivened by some warm-colored rugs. A cheery fire was glowing in the base-burner stove. An ecru and gilt wall paper with a border of roses made a good background for several pretty photographs in oak frames. The deep window sills afforded space for thrifty begonias and geraniums. It was like a glimpse of another world to the girls, or like a tale of a fairy godmother in which they were actors. A fine-looking lady of about forty sat at a corner

table leisurely eating her luncheon. Miss West had not needed Edyth's urgent request to insure her presence at this opening day; and, in fact, both Edyth and herself found Mrs. Lester's viands so delicious that they resolved for the remainder of the winter to take only their breakfasts at home.

When Snap entered she looked suspicious and surly, but a few spoonfuls of the most savory and appetizing soup the poor child had ever tasted seemed to warm her heart as well as her stomach, and her frown relaxed. There was little or no conversation in the room. The girls were mystified into silence, and busy with the wonderful food. They paid their insignificant checks to Mrs. Lester, and went out quietly and back to work. A babel of words broke loose as they went up the madam's dusty staircase.

"Girls, it ain't so!" exclaimed Maggie Flynn. "It just can't be."

"But it is!" said Ann Ferris.

"Such coffee!" ejaculated Lizzie McCrea.

"Such milk!" cried Molly Delaney.

"Such soup! Why, I feel like another person," declared Amanda Raff.

"But all as good as give away!" said Snap, meditatively. "I can't understand it."

A few days later Edyth invited all of her shopmates to spend the next Thursday evening at her home and enjoy a candy pull. Ellen Lester was the only one of them that had ever made candy, and the opportunity was too interesting to be neglected. Accordingly, at the appointed time they all appeared, eager to see where Edyth might live, and desiring to know something more of this strange companion who shared their work, wore cheap clothes, and yet was so different from themselves that her very presence among them had made them want to lead gentler and sweeter lives. Edyth's sitting room was warm and cheerful, like her welcome, and Miss West added the gracious charm of her own lovely spirit.

"We had better make our candy the first thing," said Edyth, inviting her guests out into the clean, orderly kitchen. Mrs. Lester was there to help, and was setting forth various utensils and materials upon the large table.

"Here are gingham aprons for all," said Miss West, passing one to each girl.

"Lizzie," said Edyth, "you may shell these peanuts for the taffy, and Snap—by the way, Snap, what is your real name? I've often wondered."

"Louise," replied Snap.

"What a pretty name!" said Edyth. "May I call you by it?"

"I'd jest as lief. It always seemed too nice for me."

"But Louise it must be after this with me, at least. You may chop the peanuts in this wooden tray. Molly and Maggie may stone these dates, please, and get them ready for the cream filling; and, Ann, if you will, you may help by cracking these English walnuts, while Ellen takes them out of the shells in nice halves like this—see?"

The other girls were deputed to take turns in stirring the molasses, and as the little group worked merrily together all awkwardness and strangeness wore speedily away amid cheery laughter and anticipations of the coming treat. When the candies were done and set to cool the company returned to the sitting room. There was a pile of fine, large photographs, but not

too many, on the center table, views of noted buildings and of grand scenery in our own country. Edyth showed these pictures and talked delightfully about them, and a new door opened in these dark, narrow lives. There was something deeper than pleasure in the expressive faces around the table.

Then Edyth proposed some music, but Maggie, who was the only soloist among the girls, hung back shyly.

"Come, Maggie," said Edyth, "I have a song here that just suits your voice. I will go through with it first, if you like."

Maggie stepped to Edyth's side at the organ, and Edyth sang, "There's a beautiful land on high." The words were set to music so full of heavenly inspiration in its rich tenderness and pathos that one would be willing to live long years just to breathe out one such melody for God. Maggie had hardly ever heard a religious song in her life. Edyth had never sung so well. The room was as quiet as a lonely field at night.

"My Jesus is there, He's gone to prepare,
A place in that land for me."

When she had finished there were tears in the

eyes of some of the girls. Louise had buried her head in the sofa cushions, but Maggie stood with a strange, awe-struck, but beautiful hope shining in her face, even though her cheeks were wet.

"What a lovely song!" she said, softly, after a pause that was eloquent with deep feeling. "Are there many of that sort?"

"Yes," replied Edyth, kindly, "there are a great many, but this is one of my favorites. Would you like to try it?"

"O, not now," said Maggie, "not after you; but I do want to learn it."

"Well, come in any evening, and I will teach it to you."

Molly Delaney was still poring over the photographs. She had selected a grand view of Pike's Peak, crowned with snow, and had set it up against the standard of the lamp, and sat gazing at it with an expression of wondering delight.

"Do you like it, Molly?" said Edyth.

"Like it, Miss Wilsey! I think if I was ever so tired it would sorter rest me. It looks so grand and still-like."

"You may have it, Molly, to take home and keep."

"O, but I wasn't hintin' for it, Miss Wilsey."

"I know that you weren't," replied Edyth, "but I intended one of those pictures for each of you, girls, if you like them. You may as well select them now."

The choice of the photographs was mixed with much happy conversation, but as the girls settled back into their chairs Snap, who had been nicknamed on account of a steel-trap manner of speaking, cried out:

"O, I do wish I knew things!"

"So do I!" said Ann Ferris. "But what's the use?"

"No use," declared Molly Delaney. "If a girl works hard all day she's too dead tired to go to school at night."

"We were born away down in the world, and there ain't no good in tryin' to climb up," said Lizzie McCrea, bitterly.

"O, but that is doubtless just what we are put 'away down' for," said Edyth, cheerily, "to see if there is enough to us to climb. There are better things for every one of us, better and

better, if we will have them. While Mrs. Lester is getting us some luncheon I would like to read you about the very best thing in the world, something that we can all have. A good man has called it *The Greatest Thing in the World.* Shall I read a little?"

"We're ready," said a voice.

Edyth read a few pages, and then glanced up at the circle of attentive listeners that surrounded her. Molly had come and sat on the floor at her feet.

"Shall I go on?" she asked.

"O, yes, yes!" came in a chorus of sincere appreciation.

Just then Mrs. Lester appeared in the doorway with a significant gesture that announced that refreshments were ready.

"We will go to the dining room now," said Edyth, "and finish this later."

A bountiful supply of sandwiches and pitchers of hot cocoa awaited the group, to which they did full justice. Then the platters of candy were brought, and Edyth had provided some little white pasteboard boxes, that each girl might fill one with sweets. She wondered if they

would propose to finish the essay, and it did her heart good when Amanda Raff said:

"Ain't we goin' to hear the rest of that book?"

So Edyth read on to the end.

"That's jest what you have, ain't it?" said Snap to her hostess, as the booklet was closed and laid down.

"I do love you, girls," she replied, sincerely.

"But why, Miss Wilsey? You may be poor and have to work for a livin', but you ain't our sort, and we know it," declared Ann Ferris, nervously. "If you ain't up now, you've been up."

"We won't talk about that now, Ann," said Edyth. "Sometime I will tell you just how it was that my life has been thrown with yours. I love you, every one, and I hope we are going to have some good times together. If you ask why I love you, it is because the One whom I love best, our Saviour, loves you more than I can tell, and wants you to be happier."

It was time for the girls to go home, and Edyth passed a copy of *Gospel Hymns* to each, and sat down at the organ.

"Let us try an evening hymn," she said. "I

will play it all through, and then we will sing it together."

They quickly caught the air of "Hursley," and the blessed words of the hymn "Sun of my soul" were sung very sweetly, and followed by a short prayer from Miss West.

"We've had an awful good time," said Ann Ferris, as the girls put on their hats and coats. Edyth received the somewhat dubious compliment in the grateful spirit in which it was intended, and replied:

"How would you all like to spend an evening here once a week, perhaps every Thursday? You can each one bring a girl friend if you like."

"What luck for the likes of us!" said Molly Delaney, hugging her precious picture to her heart.

"Well, you may consider that you all have a standing invitation to spend that evening with my aunt and me," said Edyth. "We won't make candy every time, but we will have something pleasant to do."

The next morning Maggie Flynn appeared at Madam Henebry's with great news to tell. "Blakely's" had sent for her in haste the night

before. One of the star singers had been taken suddenly ill, and Maggie was wanted to fill out the program.

"They want me to-night, sure," said she, "and it's good work and steady pay, and more fun than sewing one's eyes out here."

"O, but, Maggie, you won't do it, will you?" said Lizzie McCrea.

"I'd like to know why not?" asked Maggie, with a willful little toss of her head. "I would like the money."

"Well, you know if a girl wants to keep sober and decent she'd best keep away from Blakely's altogether," replied Lizzie, firmly.

"It's mighty pleasant in there of a cold night," sighed Ann Ferris. "What with the lights and the warmth and the lively music, it's a deal pleasanter than it is to home."

"Well, I may go, and I may not!" declared Maggie.

She had been skirting the edges of evil for some months. Her home was a pitiable place, for her father and brothers drank freely, and her mother was crushed in health and spirits. Maggie liked to get away from the poverty and

wretchedness and forget her troubles for a few hours. So far she had not crossed the fatal bridge to ruin, but she was dallying near the entrance to it. Less than a month before she would have hailed with unmixed delight the opportunity to sing at Blakely's; but last evening spent in Edyth's home had awakened a dim but potent desire after the beauty of goodness, and she was hesitant and ashamed. Edyth was on the alert. She walked with Maggie to luncheon.

"Maggie," she said, "I wish you'd go with me to-night and hear some of the very best music in the world. My aunt will go with us, and then you can come and stay all night at our house."

"Thank you," said Maggie. "I'll think about it, but I've a very strong mind to go to Blakely's. I ain't obliged to go to the bad just because I sing there."

"Perhaps not," replied Edyth, "but the chances would not be in your favor, would they?"

"No," said Maggie, frankly, "they wouldn't."

"There are better days coming to you soon, dear girl, if you will be brave and patient.

How would you like to go to a music school—a conservatory, they call it—and learn to sing?"

"O, Miss Wilsey, how could it be?"

"Never mind about that. I know the way. Just give up this Blakely matter forever, that's all."

"Miss Wilsey, the girls say that you ain't a real girl like us, but you're an angel come to live among us."

"A very human sort of angel," laughed Edyth. "But tell me, will you go with us to-night?"

"Yes, Miss Wilsey, I'll go," said Maggie.

Edyth had bought three seats for the oratorio of "Elijah," expecting to give some one of the girls a chance to hear one of the best things in life, and thus it happened that Maggie Flynn's depressed and benighted soul came that night into a great center of inspiring and elevating influence that made the terrible and degrading vulgarities of Blakely's appear at their real value, and showed her the two kingdoms that divide this world and strive for the mastery of human hearts. The immense audience, so quiet and refined, the glorious music

that she could not wholly understand, the majestic words, all made an appeal to the susceptible mind and heart of the girl. What most impressed her was the contralto soloist, a young woman with a noble simplicity of bearing and a rich voice, who stood unconscious of herself, plainly attired, and held the crowded house in a thrall of holy enjoyment. Maggie contrasted this singer with those whom she had heard and seen, and her cheeks flamed with wholesome shame.

"I will be like her," she said to herself. "I will sing like her, in such places and for such people as these."

Edyth had won a victory for God and heaven.

Edyth had observed, as the days wore on, the speedy effect of better food upon her shopmates. Hollow cheeks were beginning to take on rounder outlines, famished nerves were being nourished, there were fewer headaches, and consequently there was much less irritability in the workroom. She also found that each of these girls had some hidden longing for some special line of work. Louise was quick at figures, and wanted to learn bookkeeping. Molly

had considerable natural ability for drawing. Ann Ferris had an ambition to thoroughly understand the underrated art of good cooking. Lillie Riggs had dreamed silly dreams of a coming prince who would lift her to his high estate, but beneath her fostered sentimentality was a real talent for designing patterns for wall papers and dry goods. Ellen Lester and Lizzie McCrea were thoroughly domestic in their tastes. The Thursday nights at Edyth's home developed these facts and more.

After the club was well under way she withdrew from Madam Henebry's, her employment there having served its purpose to open for her a way to hearts and lives. She taught the girls much of hygiene, of personal neatness, of quietness in dress and speech, and of good reading. She visited the mothers in their dreary homes, and carried brightness and hope with her.

With the help of Amanda Raff she discovered Kathie Brent coughing her desolate life away in a dark, stuffy bedroom in the miserable flat of a poor relative. A family in the room over Edyth's sitting room had moved out, and she rented the place, had it cleansed and beautified,

and brought Kathie there to spend her last days in comfort and sunshine, with good old Clarissy Hallam installed as nurse. Clarissy enjoyed this position far more than her situation in Mrs. Lester's restaurant, and gave the sick girl the best of care. Kathie died before spring, but Edyth had pointed her to the Saviour, and she went home with the light of his welcome transfiguring her wasted face.

"I'll tell him it was you, you, you!" she whispered to Edyth just before her happy spirit vanished.

"A star in your crown, dear," said Aunt Helen, as she stood with Edyth beside the peaceful form in the casket.

"But the crown belongs at Jesus's feet, auntie. O, what could the world have ever given me in exchange for this?"

CHAPTER XI

MISS WEST and her niece had been largely influenced in the selection of their home by the fact that there was a mission chapel only a few blocks distant. It had been built and was supported by a wealthy uptown church. There was no morning service, but a Sunday school was held in the afternoon, and there was always an evening service of song with an address by some one, usually the assistant pastor, the Rev. Winthrop Leigh. The first Sunday that Miss West and Edyth occupied their flat they were too weary to present themselves at the chapel, but a week later, on a stormy afternoon, Edyth made her way there. About a hundred and fifty restless young mortals from the neighboring byways were gathered there, as well as a few adult scholars. There was not only an unusual dearth of teachers that day, but the organist also was missing. The alert eyes of the superintendent noted Edyth's entrance, and he soon made his way to the chair in the rear where she had seated herself. He

thought that she must be some young lady from the uptown Sunday school, who had come in response to a recent fervent appeal for helpers in the mission; but he prided himself on a knowledge of the membership of St. Christopher's only second to that of the pastor, and it annoyed him that he could not call this newcomer by name. He advanced in his straightforward but gentlemanly way, and extended his hand, saying with cordial dignity:

"I am Mr. Sanborn, the superintendent. May I welcome a new helper in our mission?"

"If I can be of any service," said Edyth, graciously, "I will be glad."

"You are from our church, St. Christopher's, of course?" said he. "It is strange that I cannot place you. Perhaps you have recently joined us?"

"No, Mr. Sanborn, I am not a member of your church, but I am interested in Christian work in this neighborhood, and I thought I would drop in here to-day."

"May I ask your name?"

"My name is Miss Wilsey."

"Very well, Miss Wilsey, you are certainly a

Godsend to us this day. I hope you can play for us. Our organist is ill."

Edyth said that she would try to supply the vacancy, and followed Mr. Sanborn to the platform, taking her place at the instrument. Mr. Sanborn's daughter, with a violin, and a young man, with a flute, were already there, and Edyth accompanied them in an opening selection. The storm increased in violence, and the room became so dim that it was necessary to light the gas. The first hymn was announced. The little orchestra struck up a bright, familiar air. A score of boys began to beat time with their feet, some hummed the melody vigorously, and one or two whistled it. Mr. Sanborn cheerfully but firmly called for order, and when perfect silence was obtained nodded to the organist to proceed once more. Edyth was surprised at the singing, it was so hearty and musical and inspiring. It thrilled her, too, to think of these poor children of the street learning to praise God.

She was radiantly happy to have a part in the service, all unconscious that she looked lovelier and a good deal more satisfactory to human view than St. Cecilia herself. Her clear

eyes brimmed with light, and her cheeks were flushed by the novelty and pleasure of the situation. During the second verse of the song she was aware that somebody had come in, had taken off a heavy ulster and spread it on a chair near a register, and now was standing with folded arms by the door regarding her with an interest that was too self-forgetful to be an offense. For a second her eyes were drawn in that direction. Across the throng of rumpled, restless heads she encountered that searching, masterful, gentle gaze of restrained and reverent surprise, and in that instant one pure and luminous soul recognized another, and life had become suddenly transfigured. The tall, broad-shouldered, clean-shaven man by the door made his way slowly down the narrow aisle during the last verse of the hymn, laying a kindly hand on more than one shabby shoulder; but Edyth's attention was discreetly fixed upon the notes before her, and she did not look up even when the stranger reached the platform, and she heard Mr. Sanborn say:

"We will be led in prayer by our assistant pastor, the Rev. Mr. Leigh."

In the meantime Miss Hetty Sanborn's glances had not been confined to her music. she had somewhat haughtily acknowledged her father's introduction to Miss Wilsey, and ever and anon she had scrutinized the strange organist with an unfriendly eye. With a woman's keen observance of quality and style she noted the velveteen toque and the cheap jacket and gown. She saw that the hands, when released from the black woolen gloves that made her flesh creep just to look upon, were exquisitely shaped and very soft and white, except that the index finger of the left one was roughened and discolored by needlework. She studied the refined, beautiful face, and abundant shining hair, and she knew that no young lady in St. Christopher's could compare in attractiveness with this apparently poor sewing girl. Miss Sanborn had also seen the young minister enter, and his involuntary slight start of surprise when he saw the stranger, and subsequent rapt study of the girl's face, had not escaped her lively but half-concealed attention. The regular organist, Miss Isabel Rand, was her intimate friend, the daughter of the richest man in St. Christo-

pher's. She was a stylish, rather handsome brunette, strong-willed and fiery-tempered, and Miss Sanborn knew her deep interest in Mr. Leigh and her fair chances of success. Miss Sanborn was already engaged to be married to Mr. Alton, the young man who played the flute, a performance that he laid as his weekly sacrifice at the feet of his prospective father-in-law, whose particular delight next to a flourishing business was this mission in the slums. Miss Sanborn watched with disapproval as she saw Miss Wilsey deputed to teach a class, and she determined to combat any favorable impressions that had been made upon her father.

Such was the scarcity of teachers that session that both the minister and Mr. Sanborn were obliged to do duty in that capacity, and Mr. Leigh had no opportunity to inquire about the young lady who had presided at the organ. His class was across the aisle and a little back from hers, and he did not neglect his chance to observe the fine poise of her head and the ripples of her bright hair where they broke into a few stray, sunny little curls around her face and neck. Neither he nor Mr. Sanborn gave a

thought to the quality of her clothes, for she wore them like a princess, and would have glorified a linsey gown. The rough street arabs huddled around her in open-mouthed fascination, and forgot for a time their mutual gibes and sundry pinches and pin-stickings. The Rev. Mr. Leigh had the idea that the visitor was some friend of the Sanborns from a distance, but he wondered that she had not been in their pew at morning worship in St. Christopher's. The last hymn was no sooner sung than he turned toward Mr. Sanborn to question him, but that estimable man was already in the clutches of an elderly lady who wished to consult him concerning some difficulty that had arisen in her class of girls. Edyth would not linger a moment, and bowing distantly to Miss Sanborn, whose hostility she felt, she made her way to the door, Mr. Sanborn calling to her:

"Many thanks, Miss Wilsey. Come again; we need you."

She received her mackintosh and umbrella from the hand of the janitor, and was struggling into the former when a cheery, resonant voice said:

"Allow me!"

The cloak slipped lightly over her shoulders, and the minister, for it was he, bowed gravely at her quiet word of thanks, and handed her the umbrella. He was fond of nice personal belongings himself, and while he had not noticed her dress and jacket, he observed that the umbrella was cotton with a cheap, clumsy handle, very unlike the dainty affair of silk, silver, and pearl that he had sometimes had the pleasure of holding above the head of Miss Isabel Rand. It grated on his sense of fitness as a pine frame on a choice oil portrait might have done. He saw the girl turn and pass out into the stormy winter twilight, and, battling a strong desire to go after her, as if he had a foreordained right to protect her, he wheeled around and found himself face to face with Miss Hetty Sanborn. There was a malicious light in her blue eyes.

"We had a new organist to-day," she said.

"Not a friend of yours, Miss Sanborn?"

"No, indeed! An entire stranger, and a very forward person too. She fairly thrust herself upon us!"

"Daughter," said Mr. Sanborn, who had

joined them in time to hear the remark, "you are unjust. Miss Wilsey appeared to me like a very modest and refined young lady. I went to her myself, as you saw, and asked for her assistance."

"So her name is Wilsey," said the minister to himself.

"You'll drive up with us, dominie?" said the superintendent, as he opened the door of his carriage. "There's plenty of room, you know. Room at the tea table too!"

"Thank you, Mr. Sanborn," replied Mr. Leigh, "but as there are some of our mission people ill I shall be busy in this neighborhood until the evening meeting."

"I'm afraid you'll not have much help from St. Christopher's to-night," called out Mr. Alton as the carriage door slammed on the coziness of the soft cushions and luxurious fur robes, and the restive horses leaped forward at the coachman's word.

The massive, athletic figure of the young divine strode away in the face of the driving snow, walking block after block with his hat pulled down low over his eyes, and his hands

buried deep in his overcoat pockets. He enjoyed the force of the blast, the whirling wraiths that swept around him, the wild elation of the fierce night. The rush of the storm seemed to give expression and relief to the tumult that possessed his soul, in the midst of which a strange new tongue was calling upon all that was within him to bless the Lord. It was the voice of love, silent until now amid the other voices that had clamored for the attention of a distraught and hard-wrestling life; but he recognized the belated message, and thrilled with the sweetness, the suddenness, the mystery, the suspense that it had brought. He turned into a side-street, then down and back toward the deserted chapel. Conscientious usually to the point of injustice to himself, he had entirely forgotten his sick people for the time being.

He had his own key to the chapel door, and let himself into the empty room. He lighted the gas, and walked around and closed the windows, and then went back and stood near the door. It was here that he had caught his first glimpse of her, sitting at the organ, with her lovely, sensitive face aglow with the pure delight of self-for-

getful helpfulness. It was here that his glance had unconsciously to himself compelled that momentary flashing encounter of her eyes with his own. He recalled the slight matter of the mackintosh, and the gentle dignity, so free from all coquetry, with which she had thanked him. He thought of the cheap umbrella that had proclaimed her poverty. He went to the outer door and stared out into the night that had swallowed her up. Who was she? Where was she? What roof among the thousands of that great city sheltered her shining head? Would she ever come again to the mission? He returned to the room and paced up and down with his arms behind him, while he rapidly reviewed his life.

He was descended from stanch Pilgrim stock. For generations his ancestors had feared God and had lived clean, thrifty, honest lives. They had been well-housed, well-fed, and well-informed. Riches and honors had often fallen to his family on either side; and yet deaths and misfortunes had marked Winthrop Leigh's early years with isolation and poverty. Against the dark background of those times of somber hard-

ships and thronging cares his mother's face and form shone out, a pathetic figure too fragile to breast the tempest that had burst so pitilessly upon her, but whose delicate flesh veiled a spirit devout, tender, unconquerable in its faith in God, so that she had transmitted to her son an ideal of purity and consecration that had blazed like a star upon his rough and lonely path. Year after year he had struggled and prayed and worked, wrestling his college education from the grim clutch of want, and hewing his upward steps out of the solid resistance of circumstances that were like a precipitous cliff in front of his path. He believed in the God of his fathers with a practical but buoyant faith. He believed in the coming King, and in the kingdom that cannot be moved. To be approved of God, to advance the interests of the kingdom among men, were the dominant motives of his life. At college and at the theological school he had stood head and shoulders physically, mentally, and spiritually above every man in his class. They had named him "Winthrop the Great," but his genuine humility was greater than his brilliant talents, and no man was even secretly jealous

of his honors. His serious nature was shot through and through with sunlight. His piety was not of the anæmic, moldy sort, but natural and breezy, and refreshing as a bright October day. He played a game of ball as heartily unto the Lord as he delved at his Greek and Hebrew. He had an intense love for the poor, an intelligent affection born of hard personal experience and free from any sickly sentiment. He had dreams of devoting his days to the lightening of their burdens of ignorance and misery. At thirty he was the pastor of a small country church, and it was there, while on his summer vacation, that the Rev. Robert Jewell, pastor of St. Christopher's, met the young man, loved him, and desired him for his assistant.

Winthrop Leigh found himself shortly in a position much more dangerous to his Christian character than the old days of sacrifice and painful progress. He leaped at once into warm social favor in one of the wealthiest and most exclusive religious circles in the metropolis; but he managed to maintain an impersonal and courteous course, and never allowed an attractive invitation to come between him and his

work. His principal duties were in connection with the mission, and under his labors it had been meeting with renewed success, becoming a pet hobby with several of the young ladies of the church. Of these he had been thrown especially with Miss Isabel Rand. Her father was the principal supporter of St. Christopher's. He paid out of his own pocket for the operatic soprano and tenor of the quartet, he rented the most expensive pew, and laid a crisp ten-dollar note on the plate every Sunday morning, and gave largely to the benevolences. His will and his taste predominated in every matter connected with the church, from the choice of a preacher to the pattern and color of a new carpet.

He had taken a great fancy to the Rev. Winthrop Leigh, who was an enlivening comrade for a dinner or a drive, and so he was a willing ally when his wife, in the privacy of their sleeping room, besought his good offices in a personally conducted campaign against "the knight in shining armor," as Isabel called Mr. Leigh, so distant he seemed with all his cordiality, so invulnerable to all her arts. Isabel veiled her

desires and intentions behind a very charming air of simple friendliness, and finding that the mission was the absorbing theme of Mr. Leigh's thoughts, she threw herself heartily into the work, presiding at the chapel organ, teaching a class of embryo bandits in the Sunday school, and even carrying fruits, soups, and jellies to the sick poor. Winthrop was so free from self-conceit that he did not view all this energy of devotion as having any relation to himself, and he had never given Miss Rand a word or look that she could possibly construe into a fond intent. He was kindly and frank and cheery, delighting in music and always ready to sing the tenor in a duet, or to play a game of chess, or to read aloud, maintaining a bright, unaffected, unsentimental friendliness that was the despair of the Rand family, especially as his manner was just the same in a dozen other families where he was continually invited and made welcome to the best the house afforded. Hope had sprung up in many a maiden's breast, but they were hopes that, like orchids, fed on air, so far as the discreet and impartial young preacher was concerned. The Rev. Dr. Jewell

had often marveled at the remarkable navigation that had guided so young a mariner among the rocks and shallows of ministerial popularity with such safety.

Winthrop Leigh had only thought dimly of marriage as a future possibility. He had been too busy and too poor to give any serious consideration to the subject. It was not definitely of marriage that he was thinking now, as he walked the deserted aisles of the little chapel. He was only conscious that suddenly along the prosaic roadside of life a glorious flower had burst into bloom, filling the air with fragrance and his heart with this sweet misery. He paced to and fro for an hour. The storm was evidently abating. Would she come to the evening service? And if she did could he have the courage to speak to her? Then he stood off, as it were, from himself, and ridiculed this stalwart, practical fellow, so quickly bereft of the calm indifference of years, and driven into a two-hour reverie by the sight of a new face. He went up to the desk, selected some hymns for the coming service, looked over the Scripture verses that he had chosen for a brief exposition, and tried to

thrust aside the experience of the afternoon as though it had not been, not that he might forget, but that it might rush back into his thoughts ever and anon with a thrill of newborn joy. When the janitor returned to make the room ready for the evening he was surprised to see the Rev. Mr. Leigh already on the platform busily engaged with his notebook and pencil.

"A hard night, William?" said the minister, looking up brightly.

"Not snowin' now, sir, but terrible under foot."

Among the first to arrive were two ragamuffins who were not in the habit of attending any other meeting than the Sunday school. They had been in Miss Wilsey's class that afternoon.

"Say, mister," said one of them to the janitor, "where's thet leddy what taught our class to-day? She's a brick, she is. We thought we'd come an' git a look at her."

"O, there won't no ladies git out to-night," said the janitor. "The walkin's too bad."

The minister's good common sense assented to the truth of the janitor's statement, but his

heart fell even lower than those of the expectant urchins.

"Wal, we won't stay fer no preachin' an' prayin', will we, Jim?" said the first speaker. "She's better'n all the talk; she's most as good as Christmas, ain't she?"

"You bet!" replied Jim, vigorously.

"Better stay, boys," said the minister; but they were off like a flash.

Even in defiance of his judgment, at every opening of the door through that evening Mr. Leigh's heart beat more quickly, until the clock on the wall pointed to half-past eight, and the meeting was closed.

As for Edyth, she had returned after Sunday school to her home over the German grocery, wrapped in an abstraction that caused her to put her wet umbrella on the sitting-room table, and her hat on the nickel image that surmounted the stove.

"Why, Edyth!" exclaimed Miss West. "Has the mission school turned your head?"

"No, Aunt Helen, but it was a very novel experience for me. I'll tell you all about it when I get into my tea gown and slippers."

Edyth longed just then for a room of her very own. She wanted to escape for a little from even that loving, solicitous, motherly gaze. There was an anxious look on Helen's face as she stepped back into the dining room to make the tea and toast. She feared that her niece's nerves were being overstrained, for the girl's eyes were unnaturally bright, her cheeks were flushed, and her manner was quite constrained. At the tea table she talked rapidly but entertainingly of the music, the superintendent, Miss Sanborn, and the boys that she had tried to teach, but never a word of the minister.

"Wasn't the assistant pastor there?" said Miss West.

"O, yes," replied Edyth, carelessly. "His name is Leigh, the Rev. Winthrop Leigh. He seems like a worker. I could see," she went on hastily, "that Miss Sanborn did not favor my being there. She is a stylish, proud girl, and evidently considers me quite beneath her notice. This would be intolerable to me if my apparent position were my real one. As it is, I do not mind her snubbing at all."

They retired early that night, and long after

Miss West was asleep Edyth lay awake reasoning with and reproving her heart, that had dared to vibrate like a harp to distant music, as if in the chapel of a royal castle some master hand had struck a wondrous chord on the organ keys and aloft in my lady's bower a golden lyre had tremblingly responded without mortal touch.

The following Tuesday morning the Rev. Winthrop Leigh was busy among the mission families, and at noon was hurrying to catch a street car that would carry him home to luncheon. He was still walking on enchanted ground, and was looking forward to another glimpse of Miss Wilsey. As he turned a corner he met a bevy of boisterous, loud-mannered young women, who had just come down the steps of a dressmaker's house.

"All aboard fer grub!" cried a shrill, penetrating voice.

It was Snap's rasping tone that pierced the air. Mr. Leigh involuntarily glanced at the speaker with a feeling of pity and disgust, and saw at her side the graceful figure and lovely face of Edyth Wilsey. She gave him no sign of recognition, except the vivid flame that

crimsoned her cheeks. She knew that he was judging her by her company. His long training in self-control had not prevented a look of swift and overpowering condemnation. He had found the nightingale consorting with crows. Was this the girl whose face he had foolishly enshrined in the holy place of his thoughts and affections? A cold perspiration stood upon his forehead. He walked on dazed and miserable, let his car pass him, hailed the next one as in a dream, and sat with folded arms and bowed head until his corner was reached. Edyth's gentle dignity and reserve of Sunday afternoon, when he had assisted her with her storm cloak, still appealed to his favor.

"But I did not hear her speak!" he groaned mentally. "She might tear our mother tongue to shreds. O, what an idiot I have been! Thank heaven, no one knows but myself!"

The next night was the time for the weekly prayer meeting at the mission. Mr. Leigh was invited to the Rands' for dinner with Hetty Sanborn and Mr. Alton and several other of the young people, who would make a party to go to the downtown service. Isabel Rand was looking

really brilliant in a handsome fur-trimmed gown of crimson and black, and her table-talk sparkled with wit. Mr. Leigh sat opposite to her at dinner. He realized for the first time that an alliance with her would be irreproachable in every respect. Culture, wealth, social position were all to be reckoned in Isabel's assets, and yet, until to-night, nothing but failure had stared her in the face, so far as the coveted alliance with the minister was concerned. She was aware that a sudden change had come, and that he was regarding her now with more special favor. She knew this intuitively, although he had not looked nor spoken, for a woman's heart is more sensitive than a barometer.

Winthrop Leigh had brought himself to believe that his experience of the previous Sunday had been a sort of insane delusion projected by the enemy as an angel of light, perhaps to thwart his progress and influence. It was common talk that a prominent church in Harlem, in which Mr. Rand's brother and business partner were leading spirits, was seriously contemplating extending a call to the popular young

minister, for their pulpit was to be vacated in three months' time. This was in his mind as he saw Isabel's flashing eyes between the gorgeous blossoms of the long-stemmed American Beauty roses that formed the centerpiece. He had begun to be afraid for himself. To his intense humiliation and surprise, he had found himself out as liable to be swayed by a swift and unwise impulse. Would it not be better for him to be anchored, and that speedily, where good sense and a reasonable regard for his worldly prospects might dictate? Did he love Isabel? Not as he had dreamed of love. He thrilled again with the recollection of Sunday afternoon, when he had seemed to mount on wings as an eagle into a dazzling atmosphere of bliss. Then he recalled the group of coarse girls, and Snap's voice and words, and shuddered. That very afternoon he had reread Emerson on "Love," with the hope that the philosopher's calm, farsighted treatment of the seismic subject would clear his fervid brain and slow his pulses. Doubtless Emerson was right, and the very essence of love is expressed in "a thorough good understanding." Surely he could

have that with Isabel. How heartily she had entered into his plans for the ignorant and sick and poor people under his care! How womanly she had been in her ministrations! She was well-educated, too, by travel as well as books. She would advance his interests in every way. He would escort her to the mission that night, and on their return would give her an opportunity to accept or refuse him. It was not self-appreciation that led him to feel assured that one who had been always so kind would not turn away his request. He longed to speak the word that would settle his fate, and give him rest from tormenting dreams of impractical felicity. When he helped Isabel on with her rich, jaunty seal-skin jacket, just before they started for the mission, and caught her happy little look of thanks from beneath the brim of her black-plumed hat, he thought what a really pretty, agreeable, and piquant young woman she was, and commended himself for his altogether sensible decision.

As for Edyth, she had experienced a temporary annoyance at meeting Mr. Leigh under the circumstances of Tuesday noon, but her bet-

ter nature had immediately quelled the false shame, and she would not allow herself to regret that he had seen her walking with Snap, any more than if she had been discovered in the act of throwing a rope to a drowning convict. The girls were so happy that day over their palatable luncheon that her own heart overflowed with the renewed satisfaction of doing good. There was a basket of luscious oranges by the door, with the inviting placard "Take One," and Edyth was touched to see how eagerly the fruit was appropriated and put aside to carry to a sick mother or a little brother or sister.

When the Rev. Winthrop Leigh with Miss Rand and the rest of the party entered the mission that night it was a little late, as some accident had caused a blockade of the horse-cars which at that time were the principal means of public locomotion in the city. A sort of right-hand man, a convert who kept a small shoe shop near by, was usually to be depended upon to start a praise service if the regular leader of the meeting failed to appear on time. He had looked about for some one to play the

organ, and the janitor, who remembered Miss Wilsey's Sunday performance, had pointed her out. Edyth was sitting beside her aunt when the request came, and she arose to comply, but with some reluctance.

"Do help us!" said the precentor, "for the people sing so much better with the instrument."

Thus it happened that when the minister arrived the people were shouting, "Yield not to temptation," and Miss Wilsey was playing. Mr. Leigh felt almost angry at the sight of the disturber of his peace. He advanced at once to the platform, followed by the little company from St. Christopher's, and while his head was bowed in silent prayer Edyth arose quietly, nodded slightly to Miss Sanborn, who looked annoyed, and returned to her seat beside Miss West. Miss Rand took the vacant bench, and drew off her gloves, displaying a pair of hands sparkling with jewels, and Mr. Leigh announced a hymn. During the singing he was obliged to realize that the spell of Sunday was not broken. His eyes involuntarily sought the poor sewing girl. Surely there could not be a finer, sweeter, purer

face, nor a more dignified but gracious mien. He saw beside her a woman in middle life, by whom any man might be proud to sit in church or palace. He called on some one to pray, but it is to be feared that he heard but little of the petition. Again his soul was swept by a resistless tide of conviction that his life was bound up in the bundle of life with that of this stranger. The thought of Isabel Rand was like a chip drawn into the whirlpool of inner questionings and lost as if it had never been. During the prayer he regained his mental poise and outward self-control sufficiently to proceed calmly with the meeting, but his relief was great when he saw the door open to admit a noted mission worker, who was known to be always ready with a pointed address or a stirring song. Mr. Leigh invited him to a chair on the platform, and shortly announced that the newcomer would make the address of the evening.

Mr. Leigh rested his elbow on a hymn book, and shaded his eyes with his hand. Isabel, who had been very conscious of a certain kindly solicitude in his manner on the way down, was fluttering with hope, and stole a shy look in his

direction, almost expecting to meet his shielded glance; but she perceived that he was studying the people directly in front of him, and her own eyes traveled over the heterogeneous audience, pausing on the faces of Miss West and her niece. Hetty Sanborn had told her of the organist *pro tem.* of the previous Sunday, but had said nothing of the evident interest with which Mr. Leigh had observed Isabel's substitute. Miss Rand studied her now in the same way that one might take in a fine "Portrait of a Lady." She was sensitive to delicate contours and coloring, and she admired Edyth's beauty in a languid manner, while her thoughts were of the minister. She was impressed that a critical time had come in their friendship.

After the service Miss West and Edyth became hemmed in by a little group of people who chose to exchange greetings in the center aisle, and the minister reached the door before them. It was an occasional usage of his to stand there at the close of a meeting and speak to the people as they passed out. He presumed to-night on his privilege of assistant pastor, and extended his hand to Miss West, saying:

"It is my custom to greet strangers among us, so pardon the liberty I take if I express the hope that you are sufficiently interested in our work to come again."

Helen West had been looking at the young man all the evening through a mist of tears. In his stalwart, grandly proportioned figure, his bright, manly face, his clear, deep rich voice, she had recalled the lover of her youth, and the pain that faith and time had dulled throbbed anew in her heart.

"Yes," she said, kindly, laying her hand for an instant in his, "I have enjoyed the service. At present it is the place of worship nearest to our home, so we will doubtless be often here."

"Then may I ask your name, madam?" inquired Mr. Leigh, a small memorandum book and pencil already in hand.

"My name is Miss West," she responded, "and this young lady," she continued, turning to Edyth, "is my niece, Miss Wilsey. We are living at 234 ——— Street."

The address caused Mr. Leigh to break the point of his pencil on the page, so heavily he bore on it in his surprise, for he knew the

neighborhood well. Edyth had bowed slightly at her aunt's introduction, but she did not offer her hand. Winthrop Leigh was determined to hear her speak, and he said hurriedly:

"Miss Wilsey, there are three young women in our congregation who would form the nucleus of a new Sunday school class if they could have a suitable teacher. Will you undertake the task?"

Edyth thought immediately that this would give her a grand opportunity to get some of the shopgirls into the mission, and she replied:

"Perhaps I am not adapted to such a class, but I am willing to make the experiment."

With a slight bow she was gone almost before Mr. Leigh could utter his thanks. She had spoken, and her voice was soft and musical, and her language unexceptionable! He had feared to hear two negatives, or a discordant "ain't," or a superfluous "got" fall from those perfect lips.

The throng about him fortunately left him no occasion for standing there in a brown study of this mystery. He aroused himself to minor affairs, and shook hands right and left. Isabel Rand had been chatting with her friends as

they all waited for Mr. Leigh. She had watched his interview with the strangers, but she was too happy in her self-confidence to see aught but professional interest in the brief conversation and the entry in the notebook. She smiled gayly at the minister as he approached her at last and took her jacket from her arm, which he held upside down in his effort to assist her. He flushed at his own awkwardness, and she misinterpreted his abstraction, and blushed herself with pleasure. He realized that he must take Isabel home, and he dreaded it. She would have loitered at the end of the small procession of ladies and their escorts, but he managed to gain a position about midway of the line, where they had to walk with some celerity to keep sufficiently in advance of the couple directly behind them.

Once seated on the car, Isabel noted a subtle change in Mr. Leigh's manner. The old remoteness had returned. At Fourteenth Street, where the car was boarded by more people than could be comfortably seated, he resigned his seat to a woman with two babies, and to Isabel's disgust was obliged to stand until the end of the ride.

He rang the doorbell of the Rand mansion, but when the door was opened he politely declined Isabel's rather too cordial invitation to enter, excusing himself on a plea of having to write until midnight. Isabel spent an hour in a rage of disappointment in her mother's room, and finally retired in tears.

Mr. Leigh arrived at his rooms and went to work at a competitive essay which he was preparing in response to an offer from a standard magazine; but in a few minutes he flung his pen to the farthest corner of the room, stretched out his long limbs under the table, and thrust his hands into his pockets. His face was perplexed, but lighted as by an inner torch. He arose, and throwing open a window, took long, deep inhalations of the crisp night air, flinging up his arms as one who would sweep aside barriers to freedom. He had heard Miss West as she vanished through the chapel door say, "Edyth!" and now he said it over and over, beneath his breath. A poor girl certainly, a working-girl, but a lady born and bred, a lady from her simple hat to the hem of her quiet gown, a lady in looks, in manner, in word, and in reticence! But what of the

terrible girls with whom he had met her? And what of her home in a beastly neighborhood rank with filth and wickedness? He could not recall a decent-looking house on that street. Late into the night he wondered and dreamed. He was thankful that he had not carried out his philosophic resolve toward Isabel Rand. She was a tulip, gorgeous and stately, but who ever desired to gather tulips to his heart or bury his face in their flaring, scentless cups of scarlet and gold? Edyth suggested the flowers that we love, whose fragrance, floating over garden walls in a foreign city, would fill the eyes of a wanderer with tears of remembrance and longing for home.

The next morning the Rev. Winthrop Leigh was seized with an unusual zest for visiting the people in the mission district, although it was not his regular day for such work. He turned the corner of the squalid street where Edyth Wilsey had her home, and walked by the house on the opposite side. He saw the basement grocery, the dilapidated entrance, the motley array of placards in the curtainless first-floor windows; but a story higher there were shining

panes and snowy draperies and brightly blooming plants, an oasis of cleanliness and beauty in a howling wilderness of repulsive sights. He went on his way more mystified than ever, but looking forward to a possible opportunity to make a semi-pastoral call before many days should pass.

CHAPTER XII

Edyth broached the subject of the Sunday school at the Thursday Evening Club. Some of the girls were Roman Catholics, and not disposed to attend; but Louise and Ann, Lizzie and Maggie, agreed to meet her at the chapel on the following Sunday afternoon.

Edyth was waiting with Lizzie for the others in the vestibule when Mr. Leigh arrived. His eyes brightened as he saw her, and he stepped forward with outstretched hand. His strong, kindly grasp seemed to convey assurance and protection to the brave girl in her unconventional position. Mr. Leigh spoke cheerfully and without embarrassment.

"Very glad to see you, Miss Wilsey. It is the old story of the white harvest and the few available sickles."

Lizzie had shrunk behind Edyth into a corner, where she was speedily joined by Ann, Louise, and Maggie, who had peered in at the door, and then made a dash for their comrade.

"I have ventured," said Edyth to the min-

ister, "to invite these shopmates of mine to join the new class of which you spoke on Wednesday night."

With inward amusement she saw him wince a little at the word "shopmates." She turned toward the confused and giggling quartet behind her, saying cordially:

"Girls, let me present you to the Rev. Mr. Leigh."

They came forward awkwardly, and she spoke each name clearly, and Mr. Leigh welcomed them pleasantly and said that he was expecting the new Bible class to be a great addition to the school. He invited them to the chairs that had been assigned by the superintendent. Awaiting the teacher were two other girls, who were introduced to Miss Wilsey as the Misses Martin. They were shy, sad-looking girls, not long from the country. They were employed in a paper-box factory on small wages. They boarded with an aunt not far from the mission. Edyth took her place at the end of the row, with a humble gladness of privilege. She felt that she knew almost as little of the word of God as these whom she was invited to teach, but she had care-

fully prepared the lesson for the day, and secured their eager interest from the first. Just before the close of the session the Rev. Mr. Leigh came down the aisle and paused at her side.

"I must talk with you about this class," said he. "May I see you at your home?"

"I am always at home on Thursday evenings," she replied.

"I want to consider Miss West and yourself as a part of my flock, so if I claim a pastor's privilege I hope it will not be regarded as an intrusion."

"You will be truly welcome, Mr. Leigh," she said, quietly.

As she spoke she lifted her clear gray eyes for a second to his face, withdrawing them in sweet inner confusion before the sudden flash of his own. Again an electric message had sped between these two, and each went on through the rest of the day in the conscious joy of the unspoken word.

Edyth invited the Martin girls to go home to tea with her. As they wished to inform their aunt of their whereabouts, their new teacher

went with them to the door of their home and then escorted them to her own door. They were lonely, homesick for the pretty village of their childhood where they knew everybody, and discouraged by the long hours, hard work, and small pay of the confining factory. Edyth drew their whole story from them, a commonplace tale enough. The father had earned good pay as an engineer, and the family had lived up to the limit of their income. They had had a very comfortable home and many little luxuries. When the girls left school they helped their mother about the house and "had a good time" among the other young people of the place. The father had been killed, the mother had died not long after from the effects of the shock, and there was nothing for the girls. Their father's sister had offered to share her small home with them if they could get employment near by. Her husband kept a small butter and cheese store, and they lived in the rooms over it. The girls had been interested in a church in the country, but now they had lost faith and courage. Mr. Leigh had come across them in his round of visiting, and had persuaded them to

join the mission school. Edyth told them about the Thursday Evening Club, and invited them to come to the next meeting. As they sat in her attractive sitting room, and bit by bit told their new friends of their happy past and gloomy present, and felt the sympathetic charm of the Christ-life in Miss West and her niece, new hope crept into their darkened hearts and their faces grew bright.

Maggie came in after tea to accompany the two ladies to the evening meeting, and the Martins went too, although they had not expected to venture out from their aunt's house at night, and had dreaded the hours around her dim kerosene lamp. Before they left Edyth's home Hattie Martin, the younger of the sisters, impulsively threw both arms around the neck of her young hostess and said:

"Dear Miss Wilsey, you will never, never, never know what this visit has been to us! It is the first happiness that we have known in many weeks."

The Rev. Winthrop Leigh was in his place in the desk when the little group entered the mission. He noted the changed expression of the

Martins, and surmised that they had been visiting Miss Wilsey. He was singing vigorously on the chorus of a hymn, but somehow the thought intruded itself between the lines that he would like to have the beneficent influences of such a visit himself, and he was conscious that one portion of his brain was actually counting the days until Thursday.

Edyth's cup of blessedness ran over that night, for Maggie Flynn rose for prayers before the meeting had closed, and received the forgiveness of her sins. There was joy in the mission like that among the angels.

"O, Miss Wilsey," she said, "if it had not been for you I would have been dancing in Blakely's to-night!"

Tears of gladness chased one another down Edyth's cheeks when Maggie rose and gave a bright little testimony to the praise of her Saviour. Edyth had never heard her own voice in a religious meeting, and she shrank for a few moments from the opportunity that was offered by this portion of the service, although on every side young and old were speaking of the love that had redeemed them from the power of the

enemy. At last she gathered courage to stand before them all, and said softly but distinctly:

"When I was very far from Christ, when I did not know him at all, this verse from the word of God called my soul from sleep, taught me his love, and summoned me to his beautiful work: 'He died for all; that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.' "

Isabel Rand was sitting at the organ. She had come that night with a young married couple of her acquaintance. She had not given up all hope of Mr. Leigh, for she felt assured there was at least no rival in the field. She had observed that Miss Wilsey was a beautiful girl, but she looked upon her as a princess might upon a peasant, and never thought that the minister could possibly be attracted to a person in so humble a station. As Edyth spoke Isabel saw an expression upon Mr. Leigh's face that started her heart to beating wildly with surprise and anger. She had never before seen him look like that at anyone. It was not affection that lighted his countenance, neither was it admiration. It was a divine glow. The girl's

simple statement had somehow awakened a profound response from the depths of his nature. A few lines from George Macdonald sped through Isabel's brain:

> "Two clear souls
> That see one truth, and, turning, also see
> Each other's face glow in the truth's delight,
> Are something more than lovers."

It was a revelation to Isabel that made her clench her small hands behind the organ. She watched the two narrowly from that moment, but saw no look or sign of interest pass between them. When the meeting was out, however, Mr. Leigh went down to speak a kindly word to Maggie Flynn, and Isabel saw him turn from Maggie to the Wilsey girl, take her hand for an instant, and say something that brought an almost awe-struck, tenderly solemn interest to her eyes. Isabel would have given her diamond ring to have been able to hear his words. He had said to Edyth with deep feeling:

"The Scripture that you recited to-night was my own call to service. It haunted me day and night, everywhere. It sounded like a silver trumpet in my ears until I yielded myself to God. May he bless it yet more to us both!"

Several people were waiting to speak to him, and he talked with each of them. Isabel and her friends loitered near the platform, evidently waiting for him to go home with them, but he stepped up to them and said kindly:

"Do not let me detain you to-night, for there is a man here very much under conviction, and I am going to stay a while and help him."

Miss West and Edyth had already disappeared, so Isabel was assured that Mr. Leigh had not excused himself to walk home with them, but it was small comfort to her as she rode uptown, absorbed in dark and bitter thoughts.

On the next Wednesday night Louise accompanied Maggie to the mission. She was not so simple-hearted nor so trustful as her friend, but she made up her mind to be a Christian, and said so in her brusque, determined way.

"It's all along of her," she said to Mr. Leigh after meeting, pointing to Edyth. "I never knew how ugly I was till she come into the shop, an' set there so patient an' sweet day after day. I can't never look like her, never hev sech hair nor sech a skin, but, the Lord helpin' me, I'm goin' to be like her on the inside anyhow."

"There's no one that ever had more of the love of Jesus in the heart than you can have, Miss Peters," replied the minister, smiling.

"But he ain't told me yet that he's forgive me," said Louise, wistfully.

"Are you sure of that?" questioned Mr. Leigh.

"Well, I don't feel as if he had," said Louise.

Mr. Leigh had opened his pocket Testament. "Have you confessed your sins?" said he.

"I've told him that I'm awful sorry for everything I ever done that warn't right, an' I've nothin' good to say fer myself nohow," replied the girl. "But I don't feel as Maggie says she does."

"But the Bible doesn't tell you you must feel as Maggie does, or feel at all, for that matter," went on the minister. "Here is what God says about it in his own word: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Now you've done your part and confessed. Has he kept his part of the agreement?"

"He wouldn't be God if he didn't, would he, sir?"

"No," said Mr. Leigh, reverently.

"And he is God?" asked Louise, thoughtfully.

"'From everlasting to everlasting,'" quoted the minister, with solemn emphasis.

"Then, of course," said Louise, slowly, "of course, it's so, no matter if I don't feel it. I've confessed, and he—has forgiven me! O, glory to God!"

She had sprung to her feet, her eyes shining and uplifted, her dark face no longer lowering and morose, but beaming with the same light that once shone on the way to Damascus. Among the little group who had lingered in the chapel some one started the old hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood," and as they sang a girl's slender figure came timidly but decidedly along the aisle from the rear seat and knelt down beside Louise and Maggie.

"It's Lil!" whispered Maggie to Miss Wilsey, bending over the familiar auburn head with a loving touch. Edyth could hardly believe the witness of her own eyes. To see three of her girls within one week come to Christ filled her with an almost overwhelming delight. She knelt and prayed for Lillie, forgetful of all else

except the seeking soul and its welcoming Saviour. Miss West, too, poured forth a tender, earnest petition, and as she prayed the peace of God flowed into Lillie's trusting heart. She had not a tempestuous nature like Louise, and God answered her in peace that was not an exaltation, but an infinite, pervading rest. She lifted her tranquil, tear-wet face, and looked at Edyth with an expression of love unspeakable.

"He's my Jesus, too, Miss Wilsey!" she said. "I wouldn't have known him but for you."

As Edyth walked home with her aunt that night the very flagstones along the wintry streets seemed to praise the Lord.

"Aunt Helen," she said, under her breath, "I hardly know whether I am in the body or out of it. I never knew before how bright the stars are!"

The Rev. Winthrop Leigh overtook them as they turned the corner. "This has been a blessed day!" said he. "Miss Wilsey, you are a soul-winner."

"God has blessed a few little efforts far beyond their desert," she replied. "I am almost too happy to live."

"Better to sing, 'Lord, if I may, I'll serve another day,'" said Miss West.

Just then they came to the block next to that where their home was situated. A whole row of shabby old buildings had begun to be demolished, and the sidewalk was so covered with rubbish that they had to cross the street.

"I wonder what is contemplated here?" said Mr. Leigh. "I am glad to see so many old rookeries disappear, but I cannot find out what is to be erected instead. I inquired of the overseer only yesterday, but he was singularly reticent about it."

"We have heard," said Edyth, "that some one is to build a chapel, a home for working-girls, an amusement hall, and a model tenement house, light and sanitary. I would love to see such a scheme succeed."

"And I," replied the minister, "but it seems, as the children say, 'too good to be true.'"

"Well," she said, "it ought not to seem improbable in a great Christian city like this. However, we can wait and see."

Mr. Leigh bade the ladies good night at their door, saying, as he lifted his hat:

"Miss West, I hope I have your permission, also Miss Wilsey's, to call to-morrow evening."

"I assure you, Mr. Leigh, that a pastoral visit will be a great pleasure to me."

"I think I ought to tell you," said Edyth, "that a small circle of girls meets at our house every Thursday night. You have seen some of them at the chapel. We are on our way to the Pacific coast, and will stop in Chicago to-morrow evening. I hope you may find it agreeable to tell us something about it."

Mr. Leigh was conscious of a shade of disappointment, for he had hoped to find the ladies at liberty from other callers. Nevertheless he said courteously:

"Not many years ago I spent a winter in that city, and you will certainly be welcome to such impressions as I have retained of it."

He went on his way, confirmed in all the beautiful thoughts he had indulged of Edyth. He could not account for her surroundings, but she herself seemed to him to be the best and loveliest of women, whose image was indeed worthy to be cherished in his heart beside that dear, unfading memory of his sainted mother.

The next night found him at the girls' club, and Miss West and Edyth were even more delighted than the other members at his vivid, brilliant descriptions of that typical American city on Lake Michigan. Edyth had provided numerous photographs, and as he explained their special features he was making a keen study of human nature, so that when he took his leave, in less than an hour, he had formed a just estimate of the sincerity and enterprise of the girls, and was filled with admiration and wonder at the lifting power that one cultivated, consecrated young life like Miss Wilsey's can exert on many. He did not go away without a special word of encouragement to each of the three girls who had just started in the Christian life, and a brief, general statement of the love of Christ that fell like a benediction on the little circle. Miss West and Edyth thanked him for his assistance that night, and he strode off through the frosty air, walking all the way to his rooms, that he might think more clearly about the strange circumstances that had discovered to him this gem of womanhood in such a swamp of human degradation as ——— Street.

During the next fortnight he saw Edyth several times at the mission, and called at her home. They were both greatly interested in the reported plans for rebuilding the next block. The work of demolition had progressed with marvelous celerity.

"I am afraid that I almost envy the man that can put such a magnificent desire into tangible, practical form," said Mr. Leigh. "I have long felt that my mission in life is to the poor, but I constantly feel my financial limitations. The needs are so numberless that a little money is soon completely out of sight."

"But it is a pleasure to watch such an enterprise as this, whoever is called to it," said Edyth. "I sometimes wonder that very wealthy people, who are searching continents for fresh pleasures, should miss the absorbing delight there is in losing one's self in the progress of Christ's kingdom."

The minister gave her a swift, searching look that was almost an interrogation. She had said more than she intended; but the next instant she had changed the conversation so skillfully that his momentary suspicion was ban-

ished. He was sure that she was poor. Even as she talked with him she was mending one of the coarse woolen gloves that he had seen her wear. This was before she left Madam Henebry's, and she said to her caller, by way of apology for not giving him her undivided attention, that her hours in the dressmaker's workroom were so long that she did her own repairing in the evening. He had noted that notwithstanding a certain indefinable air of elegance in her sitting room that the details were all very inexpensive. He found that Miss West had once been a school-teacher, so he was not surprised at her intelligence; but he wondered that her niece, who was evidently well educated, was not teaching rather than working with her needle in a low-class establishment like that around the corner. He ventured to remark that he would suppose that she would find teaching a congenial occupation; but she replied that she had not been trained to teach.

Mr. Leigh and Edyth were living at this time in that enchanted region where love lays its finger on the lips for a season, depending on other tokens than words to convey its sweet

intent, and reveling in a bliss of suspense that must soon end in certainty, and, ending, lose forever an inexpressible charm all its own, although making way for a more solid happiness.

On a Saturday afternoon the young minister sent Edyth a bunch of English violets, and the following day when she entered the mission chapel he saw that she had pinned them to her jacket. Isabel Rand had already arrived, having driven down with the Sanborns. She was pale and nervous and somewhat irritable. She had reached the chapel before Mr. Leigh, and when he came in and stepped upon the platform he had included the whole company there in a cordial "Good afternoon," and took his seat beside the superintendent with no special recognition of her valuable presence. Isabel had a class of small boys, and she sat during the lesson where she could command a view of the whole room. She furtively watched Mr. Leigh as he went from class to class with a pleasant greeting. She saw him pause beside Edyth Wilsey, bend his head a moment while he spoke a sentence or two, and then pass on with a countenance suffused in that light "that never was on

sea or land." She also saw Edyth's drooping lids and rising color. A flood of jealous rage surged in her soul. She stammered, dropped her book, then arose hastily, and with a word of excuse to her class made her way to the vestibule. She hoped that Mr. Leigh would see her and follow her, and, finding she was faint, take her home, perhaps, in the Sanborns' brougham. She had subjected herself to a great deal of what she considered real hardship for the mission, and she thought that it could not fail to elicit sympathy from the minister to see her overcome at her post of duty. Isabel heard the door open behind her, and, turning, saw only Hetty Sanborn coming to her relief.

"Are you ill, dear?" asked Miss Sanborn.

Isabel was holding the outside door ajar and pressing her face in the aperture.

"The air inside is vile to-day," she said, crossly, "and I felt nearly stifled. I'm getting sick of this chapel business."

"So am I, Belle," said Hetty, "but I'll have to stick to it so long as father keeps up the fad."

"Did you see that plebeian Wilsey girl?" went

on Isabel. "Winthrop Leigh spoke to her, and they each turned into a small planet for brightness."

"Nonsense, Belle," snapped Hetty. "He wouldn't walk into that trap and ruin all his prospects."

"I'd like to kill her!" flashed Isabel.

Mr. Sanborn now appeared in the hall.

"Well, girls," he said, "nobody seems to be suffering here. Come in as soon as you can."

They returned to their classes, and Mr. Leigh approached Isabel and said cordially:

"Will you be able to call on old Mrs. Clement to-morrow? She has sent word that she wants to see you."

Mrs. Clement was a rheumatic member of the mission to whom Isabel had made herself very agreeable, as the case was one of especial interest to Mr. Leigh. Isabel looked up moodily. There was no radiance on his face now.

"I am going to Lakewood this week," she said, "for a rest."

"Then I suppose we must excuse you."

She scanned his expression narrowly. There was not a shade of regret at the thought of her

absence. She was suffering keenly, and her face was white. Winthrop Leigh noticed it.

"You deserve a vacation," said he, kindly. "You have stood by bravely."

He did not ask on what day or train she was going. She bit her lips as he said:

"I may not see you again before you go, so I will say good-bye now."

He held out his hand and touched her cold, listless fingers. Her eyes were blazing, and there was a small red spot on each of her cheeks. As he turned away with a bow and a smile, hatred for him and for the girl she was sure now that he loved ran riot in her heart.

It had been a raw, lowering day, and at the close of the Sunday school session a light rain had set in. Mr. Leigh had simply said to Edyth Wilsey that he would like to converse with her about the Martin girls after the exercises. When the benediction had been pronounced, and the school was dispersing, she sat in her place. Isabel Rand saw the minister put on his coat and go to Edyth, hat and umbrella in hand.

"We can hardly talk here," he said, "for the janitor is eager to get home to his sick wife.

If you have no objection, I will walk in your direction."

The two went out together, and a few moments later the carriage containing the Sanborns and Isabel Rand passed them, and Isabel saw them walking slowly under the minister's umbrella. It was dusk, but the street lamp revealed Winthrop Leigh's broad shoulders, towering beside Edyth's little black hat. Isabel sank back against the cushions, and planned to compound a bitter draught of revenge for the young preacher that would be sweeter than honey to her own evil spirit.

Mr. Leigh and Edyth had spoken not a word as they left the chapel together. They were conscious of never having been strangers to each other. A "Thus saith the Lord" seemed to Winthrop to glow above them as they walked. There was no constraint in the prolonged silence, only blessed, perfect content. He felt the gentle weight of her arm in his, and knew that she was destined to walk with him until God should call one of them to himself. At length he spoke, reverently, tenderly, with an assurance that was born of divine conviction:

"I have known you since the morning stars sang together. There has been no beginning. There can be no end."

She was not startled, although she trembled from head to foot. She might as well resist the rotation of the earth on its axis. She remembered a time when she had stood behind the American Fall at Niagara, deafened, blinded, and almost breathless, but with an awful and exalted consciousness of God in the stillness and security of the cleft rock. The minister feared lest he had shocked and frightened her by his impetuous words, and he stopped in the glare of a lamp, and bent to look in her face. Her eyes were brimming with tears, but there was a smile on her lips.

"Is it not so———Edyth?"

He hesitated an instant ere he spoke her name.

"It is so—" she too hesitated, flushing crimson in the darkness.

"Say it, dear heart," he pleaded. "Say, 'Winthrop.'"

She did his bidding timidly, half whispering the name. They were at her door, but she did

not invite him to enter. He did not expect it. He could appreciate fully her feeling when she said, as she withdrew her arm from his:

"I cannot bear all this happiness quite yet. I want to get away even from you, to be alone with God."

"I understand, dear," he replied, gently. "May I come to-night after service?"

"Yes," she said. "It is going to be a rainy evening, and Aunt Helen will not wish to attend the chapel, so I will stay with her."

Winthrop Leigh turned away as on air, humming an old Te Deum. Edyth climbed slowly up the stairs to her aunt, moving as in a golden mist. She threw her arms around Miss West's neck and kissed her, and that good lady perceiving an unwonted halo, and having a heart history of her own, asked no questions, but said to herself as she made the tea, which they always took at home on Sunday nights, "It can't be so soon."

But it could, and was.

"Auntie," said Edyth, "I am going to shut myself up in our bedroom for a little while, if you don't mind. I'll get some tea later."

It was an hour after that Edyth opened the door, crept up softly behind her aunt, who was reading her Church paper by the lamp, and kissed her gently on the top of her head. Without turning her head, Miss West reached up one hand to take the one she knew would meet her own.

"Don't look, auntie, dear," murmured Edyth, "that is, not just this minute. The—the minister will be in to-night after meeting."

"Well?" said Miss West, with a pretense of mental density.

"Well," said Edyth, "he spoke this afternoon."

"Doesn't he speak every Sunday afternoon?" asked Miss West, innocently.

"O, you dear, ridiculous auntie!" exclaimed Edyth, hugging her nearly to the point of dislocation. Then, being set entirely at ease by Miss West's manner, she moved around in front of her aunt and sat down on the floor at her feet.

"You can't surprise me, my child," said Miss West. "I have felt this in the air from the first. I cannot tell you the gladness that is in

my heart for you. As for that in your own, I know all about it."

She smiled at Edyth in sincerest sympathy, but the next instant her bright, brave soul had yielded to a sudden rush of tender memories, and she had buried her face in her hands. Edyth stole quietly out into the dining room.

CHAPTER XIII

It was not many days before St. Christopher's was agitated by the news that the Rev. Winthrop Leigh, its particular protegé and pet, had begun to show the most marked attentions to a working-girl in the vicinity of the mission. The report gained credence, and a number of the parishioners manifested a very sudden interest in the downtown services, that they might see for themselves. Isabel had sown a large crop of thistles before her departure for Lakewood, and had nourished it from afar. It grew rapidly, and on her return after a fortnight she found a rich harvest of trouble ready for the pastor's assistant.

For several weeks the gossip and criticism went on. Winthrop Leigh kept it under his feet, and Edyth, so busy and happy day after day, was indifferent to the openly expressed contempt of Miss Rand and her friends. She could see that her lover was destined to the loss of his position, and if she had been a poor girl she could not have endured the thought of being a

disadvantage to him in any way. She had not yet told Mr. Leigh her history, but had asked him to trust her until she felt free to explain herself fully. He knew that she had left the dressmaker's place, but she had told him truly that she had work to do at home. She was absorbed for hours every day in certain much-penciled sheets of drawing-board, and went back and forth a good deal between her home and the Dayton parsonage.

Winthrop Leigh observed that his dinner invitations had fallen off, that the Rands scarcely recognized him, that a current of constantly growing opposition had set in, and he sometimes felt somewhat depressed at the changed attitude of the people of St. Christopher's. An hour with Edyth always compensated him for any trial that crossed his path, and being sure of the favor of God, he felt that he could maintain himself against the world. Even Mr. Sanborn's hearty manner had become constrained, and his daughter had at last withdrawn with Miss Rand from the Sunday school. The pastor of St. Christopher's had been closeted in his study several times of late with Mr. Rand and

other of the officials of the church. At length Dr. Jewell asked his assistant to call at the parsonage on a certain morning to discuss a matter of grave importance. As has been related, Dr. Jewell loved the young man. His own son, an only child, had been drowned while at college. Had he lived he would have been just the age of Winthrop Leigh.

Dr. Jewell stood on the hearth-rug in his study when Mr. Leigh appeared. He held out a strong and friendly hand, and motioned to a chair near by. Winthrop was struck by the seriousness of Dr. Jewell's expression.

"You have business with me, sir?"

"Yes, my son, and painful business to us both."

There was a long pause. Dr. Jewell cleared his throat several times, and then proceeded with unwonted hesitation.

"You are aware, Winthrop, that a minister has sometimes to suppress and sacrifice his personal wishes that he may adapt himself to the—the—opinions of his people."

Dr. Jewell was a very politic man. Winthrop's eyes flashed ominously.

"You have been not only very useful, but exceedingly popular, among the members of our church and congregation," went on the pastor, "consequently it is with the greater regret that some of our most influential people have learned that you seek the companionship of a young woman whose surroundings are, to say the least, degrading. It is one thing to labor for the spiritual welfare of the poor and ignorant; it is quite another to meet them upon equal terms socially."

Winthrop had turned white with righteous wrath, but his profound respect and love for Dr. Jewell sealed his lips for a little while.

"And now, my son," went on the elder man, with evident sorrow for his message, "it is the wish of St. Christopher's, and I may add my own wish, that you discontinue your present course in regard to this girl whose station is so much beneath your own."

Winthrop had risen to his feet, and now looked Dr. Jewell proudly in the eyes.

"Miss Wilsey is my promised wife," he said, "and no purer, more refined, more cultivated young lady walks this earth."

"O, my poor boy!" groaned Dr. Jewell. "Has love indeed made you blind? You are not the first man who has been willing to sacrifice brilliant prospects to a pretty face."

"But in this case the face is but an exponent of a most lovely character," replied the young man. "Dr. Jewell, have you ever seen her?"

"No, my son."

"Then I have a favor to ask. Let me bring her here soon to meet your wife and yourself for a few moments."

"I think that Mrs. Jewell will not refuse your request. She has felt almost a mother's interest in you from the first. But now let me finish my commission. The church through its officials wishes to inform you that unless you accept their alternative, namely, to retire from this love affair, your connection with us must cease by the Easter celebration. I also must warn you privately that your prospects for becoming pastor of the Harlem church will be hopelessly blighted. Please respect my confidence when I tell you that Mr. Alberton Rand threatens to withdraw his support from this church, and his brother will close the doors of

that church against you, if you persist in your attention to Miss—to this lady at the mission."

Winthrop stood at his full height, and said with great but controlled emotion:

"Dr. Jewell, I would give my life for my future wife; how much more my present welfare and hopes of preferment! These people insult my judgment and good sense, and my most sacred right of choice. They shall have my resignation at once."

"Let me plead this once with you, Winthrop. Do not thwart your best interests and hang a millstone around your neck. Marry a woman who will be a help to you socially, who will bring you wealth, and will add culture to your own culture. If I might suggest, there is Miss Isabel Rand, who——"

"Please, sir, do not speak of her," interrupted Winthrop. "The woman who has given her pledge for mine was sent to me by God, marked with my name. Our compact is of the nature of the everlasting hills. I ask once more, will you see her?"

Dr. Jewell knew that his wife was in her sitting room next to the study, so he stepped to

the door and asked her to come and speak with Mr. Leigh. She was a dignified but motherly woman, aristocratic in her birth and training, but with a heart humble before God. She greeted the young man with subdued kindness. It was hard for her to condone a breach of correct taste. Dr. Jewell presented Winthrop's request.

"My personal regard for you, Mr. Leigh," she said, "has weathered so far this storm of criticism. If we may meet your friend at our own table we will be able to obtain a correct view of the situation. If we disapprove, you must know that we have your welfare at heart. Are you free to-morrow night, Dr. Jewell?" she said, turning to her husband.

"From six to eight," he replied.

"And you?" she asked of Winthrop.

"Yes, Mrs. Jewell."

"Then allow me to detain you while I write a note inviting Miss——"

"Miss Wilsey," said Mr. Leigh.

"Miss Wilsey," repeated Mrs. Jewell, "to dine with us to-morrow night."

She seated herself at her husband's table and

helped herself to pen and paper, writing a very gracious invitation, which Mr. Leigh accepted with thanks and put into his pocket. Edyth received it that evening very gladly, as she was entirely unaware of the test to which her lover had been subjected. When the time came she had a very feminine temptation to take a certain rich and becoming lavender gown from her trunk, and surprise Mr. Leigh; but she contented herself with her Sunday cashmere touched up by fresh, dainty ruchings and a knot of black velvet ribbon. She noted that there was a shadow on Mr. Leigh's face, but attributed it to a headache.

Mrs. Jewell's well-trained features were a study when her eyes first fell on her fair guest. She had not been prepared for such a vision. Her heart surrendered at once, and her judgment soon followed suit. She had indulged in a bit of innocent strategy that night. There was visiting at the parsonage a brilliant young woman from the West, a graduate of Wellesley, and a pronounced beauty. Mrs. Jewell knew that Mr. Leigh could not tolerate any *gaucherie* or vulgarity in a woman, and she had in mind

to bring Miss Wilsey into bold relief against the faultless background of her visitor's unusual mental and physical charms. The dinner was arranged with punctilious regard for the most trivial conventionalities. Doubtless the Wilsey girl would be silent and ill at ease, and Winthrop would see his mistake before it was quite too late. It had been many weeks since Edyth had found herself in such a thoroughly congenial company, and her nature expanded like a water lily in the morning sun. Her entire absence of self-consciousness, her perfect acquaintance with the little minor tests of a polite dinner, astonished her hostess, while her intelligent conversation charmed Dr. Jewell, and threw the St. Louis belle entirely into the shade. Mr. Leigh had never seen Edyth on a social occasion like this, and the shadow fled from his brow, and he triumphed silently in her conquest of his friends. After dinner he retired to the study with Dr. Jewell, and drew a paper from his pocket.

"My resignation, sir," he said, respectfully but tersely.

"Keep it, my boy," said the doctor. "I think

the officials will listen to my representations. You have a woman in ten thousand."

"A working-girl, Dr. Jewell, remember—a dressmaker's assistant in ——— Street. No, my dear sir, I cannot serve St. Christopher's another week."

Before they left the parsonage Mrs. Jewell managed to whisper to Mr. Leigh:

"A princess in disguise. Bring her to us whenever you can."

On the way home Winthrop told Edyth of his resignation, and her woman's wit assured her of the real cause of it.

"Winthrop," she said, "I suspect that I am the means of your leaving your position."

His utter silence convinced her.

"You see that I am a sort of mind-reader," she said, smiling.

He wondered that she could speak so lightly. He was human, after all, and was conscious that he had surrendered a great deal for her sake. He thought that she should at least show deep feeling at the turn in his fortunes, and deplore the fact that she had been even the innocent cause of his loss of place and influence. He

could not understand her cheerfulness. It grieved him.

"This will postpone our marriage indefinitely," said he. "I may not be able to offer you a suitable home for a long time. I shall probably have to leave the city."

Still not a word of regret from the girl at his side. He scorned to ask her if she did not care. This was the first time that she had failed him with a full complement of sympathy, and his heart felt the chill of disappointment.

"Did God ever close a door to one of his children without opening another?" she said, quietly.

"I suppose not," he answered, somewhat distantly.

She seemed to be blind to the fact that he was in a state where he did not need to have his faith in God stimulated so much as he required warm and responsive human appreciation of his devotion.

Edyth had perferred to walk downtown that night. A recent heavy rain had cleansed the sidewalks, the air was clear and not very cold, and there was a full moon. Mr. Leigh was

looking straight ahead, and did not see how her eyes were dancing with delight.

"Winthrop," said she, controlling a joyous tremor that was determined to break through her voice, "if you could do just as you prefer, what would it be?"

"I think you have heard me remark," he replied, coldly, "that it has been my one chief desire to work for the poor, to devote my life to them. I see small prospect of it now."

They walked several blocks in silence. He was behaving very badly, and he knew it; but had he not poured all that there was of him into one mighty sacrifice to the woman he loved, and had she not received it as a mere matter of course, with an almost trifling manner, and with no word of tenderness or regard? Man though he was, there swept over him a great longing for his mother. If he might go home to her that night, and lay his head on her shoulder as he used to do when a lad, and tell her the whole story!

Just then Edyth's hand slipped down his rough coat-sleeve into his own strong fingers. Instinctively they tightened over it, hurt though

he was. She attempted to speak, but her voice broke between a sob and a laugh. Instantly his whole soul was on the alert.

"O, my love!" she said. "What this proof of your sincere affection means to me I could not tell you with ten thousand tongues. When I first left school my father was living, and he planned a marriage for me that he thought would give me great social advantage. I knew nothing of life nor of love. I acceded to my father's arrangement. I learned to care for the man whom he chose for me, for I thought that it was an honest admiration and devotion that were given to me. Providentially I learned for myself that the man was in need of money, and that I was nothing to him except as a means of making my father's fortune available to him. I dismissed him from my life as if he had not been. It was at this time that I became a Christian. I will tell you all about it any day; but suffice it to say now that the sudden death of my father left me an immense fortune at my own disposal. I have chosen to learn something of the life and troubles of girls less fortunate than myself, and to help them to more

useful and happier lives; but my work is only just begun. You have thought that I did not see what your love for me would cost you. I have seen from the beginning. I have waited and have let you come to this great test because I knew that God was preparing to put into your hands the implements for doing the very work that your soul has so long coveted."

Winthrop Leigh was spellbound. He tried to speak, but could not. He walked on mechanically for a while, not observing through what locality they were passing. Suddenly Edyth paused.

"Look!" she said, pointing across the street. It was the block where the old buildings had been torn down and the foundations of the new structures had been laid. On the corner the walls of a stone chapel had begun to rise. In the flood of moonlight every stone stood out in bold outlines. It shone through the arch of the chapel entrance.

"Winthrop, dear," went on Edyth, "it is your ideal and mine that is taking shape in granite and mortar over there. It is you and I who will be stewards of God in this place, showing forth

his loving-kindness to the suffering brethren of our Lord. It is your money and mine, our money, that by the blessing of God will make the desert, the dreary, hopeless desert of ignorance and pain and sin in this neighborhood, blossom like the rose with hope and salvation. Darling, the mystery is solved, is it not? I could not keep my secret from you any longer. Every day I have longed to consult your taste, to ask your advice. Mr. Dayton, my guardian, cannot take the necessary time to look after the details of this work. He will offer to you tomorrow the position which it is so necessary to have filled, namely, that of overseer of the enterprise. I hope you will see fit to accept it."

Winthrop Leigh seemed for a few moments as one paralyzed, but when they were safe within Edyth's sitting room he recovered first the use of his arms, even before Aunt Helen's very eyes, and though his tongue was slow in regaining its usual fluency of speech the few words that he managed to speak were perfectly satisfactory to Edyth.

At the next Thursday Evening Club, Edyth informed the girls of her plans for them. She

told them that she expected to become the wife of the Rev. Mr. Leigh, and that they hoped to complete and open the new buildings on the next block by Christmas of that year.

"Some of you," she said, "can be made very useful to the work by a little training. We shall need a bookkeeper, a nurse, some one to buy supplies for the restaurant, to plan meals, to cook them, some to visit the sick in the neighborhood. Mrs. Lester and Ellen will be invited to be the housekeepers. There will be plain sewing and mending to be done by somebody. If you will enter into these plans, and choose your own parts in them, I will furnish you with means to get the necessary training. Maggie and Lillie, as you know, are already studying music and designing, as I have advanced them the funds. Of course, you will give Madam Henebry fair warning if you decide to leave her, that she may have ample opportunity to supply your places. She will easily secure other girls, and we can help them also."

Edyth's remarks were received with unbounded enthusiasm. Some of the girls wept for joy. When they knew that a model tenement house

was to be included in the buildings, where for a small rent people could have the means for being clean and comfortable, receiving a share in the light and air that God has made for everyone, and greedy man has withheld from his poor brethren, their hearts broke out into such loving speech that Edyth was fain to thrust her fingers in her ears and beg them to remember their heavenly Father and not his servant.

Mr. Leigh received the expected request from Mr. Dayton to take charge of the erection of the chapel and other buildings. The offer of a very liberal salary accompanied the wish, and such were the requirements of the position that there was no suggestion of a sinecure with sacrifice of self-respect.

"I have just one more secret from you, dear," said Edyth, one day. "Before I told you about this building scheme I had some raised letters cut on the chapel arch and carefully covered."

"I observed that the arch was screened,'" replied Mr. Leigh, "and I have been on the point several times of asking the contractor to let me see the lettering, but something else claimed my attention."

"Well, please don't ask," said Edyth, "for that is my secret."

"Of course I will respect your wish," he said, loyally.

Easter came and went, but it did not bring Edyth's wedding day, for she had set the next December, when the new chapel should have been dedicated. May brought a few unseasonably hot days, when the odors of ——— Street became almost overpowering.

"Do you realize, Edyth," said Winthrop, "that you have chosen to have our permanent home in this horrible neighborhood?"

"Yes," she replied. "It may not always be necessary for us to live here, but for a few years I think we should remain right in the midst of our people. The Home will be a stately building, and we will have the top floor fitted up for our own use. We can play at Syrians, you know, and have a lovely warm-weather sitting room on the roof."

Miss West had borne the winter well. She had even enjoyed it. But now a severe attack of "Heimweh" seized her, and Edyth found her one evening on the sofa weeping surreptitiously.

"Why, auntie, dear!" exclaimed Edyth.

Helen laid her hand on her heart and tried to smile. "It is nothing, child, except a longing for dear old Sunnyslope."

"You poor, patient love!" said her niece, nestling down beside her, "how thoughtless I have been! I'll pack you off to-morrow."

"But you cannot stay here alone, Edyth, not a day."

"No; but Mrs. Lester and Ellen will come here, and O, Aunt Helen! Why haven't I thought of it before! Mayn't I buy the old home in Sunnyslope and fit it up for a fresh-air place for our girls?"

"It would be much better than to let it stand empty," said Helen, who had brightened already at the very thought of really returning to her native village.

"Well, when Winthrop calls this evening I will ask him to escort you to the station to-morrow morning. You must get ready at once."

Edyth ran to the storeroom and dragged her aunt's big valise into the front room. Before bedtime it was packed and locked.

"I can't bear to leave you, dear," said Miss

West, "but something seems to call me back to Sunnyslope. I dreamed last night of it, the shy violets in the grass, the swelling buds on the rose vines, the orchard all pink and white, the ripple of the river, and they all said, 'Come!' Darling, I am going home, going home!"

Her cheeks were as pink as those of a young girl, and her eyes sparkled.

"O, Aunt Helen," said Edyth, throwing her arms around Miss West's neck, "how much you have sacrificed for me!"

"No, Edyth; say, rather, how much I have gained through you. But now I want to fly away for a little. I want to breathe long, deep breaths of the pure air of the hills; I want to feel the grass under my feet again; I want to lean over the brown gate under my mother's lilac bushes!"

The next evening found Miss West starting a fire on the hearth in her own cozy sitting room. A cool, damp wave had followed the hot spell, and she was glad to feel the glow of the leaping, crackling flames. Edyth's experiment had delighted and interested her, but she had felt the great change from her peaceful life of years in

a country town to the tenement-house district in New York city. She was hungry and thirsty for air, for space, for sweetness. Then, too, while she rejoiced in the rich experience of love that had come to Edyth, the sight of the two young, exuberant lives so happy in their work and so sufficient to each other was like a knife that daily tore the terrible wound of the past and made it throb anew. She was glad for a little season to retire from the new life and to be alone with memory, since she might nevermore commune with earthly hope.

The second Sunday morning of her stay she awoke before sunrise and heard the robins singing in the cherry trees. She watched the glimmering dawn until bands of bright gold on the opposite wall of her room told that the day had opened in unclouded splendor.

"The tenth of June," she said as she made her toilet, "and Sunday too!"

It was indeed the anniversary of that Sunday in the long ago when we first saw her at the window; and now the woman, chastened, patient, calm, and still beautiful, recalled the girl that trembled and hoped and exulted and

thrilled in this very room on that glorious morning when her life was opening up before her in a pageant of emblazoned delights. Now, as then, she threw open the shutters and plucked a red rose, fastening it in the bodice of her white morning wrapper. She stood looking out at the same velvety hills across the river. She recalled her mother's knock at the door, and the serene love-lighted face, and she drew the same old rocking-chair a little forward and sat down on the floor in front of it, trying to imagine the soft touch of blessing on her hair, and to bring back from the dead the sound of that tender voice. She could remember almost every word of her mother's little sermon, and the short prayer that closed their precious communion. It was all so many years ago! She buried her silver-crowned head in the chair cushions, and praised God that, although he had afflicted her sorely, he had not forsaken her; though he had wounded, he had comforted her "as one whom his mother comforteth." He had established her goings and directed her. She could still trust him, and say even with joy, "Thy will be done."

After breakfast she wandered up into the old orchard. It had been neglected, and unpruned boughs thrust their low-hanging, leafy branches across the grassy path. The board seat under the trees had at some time lost its original support, and was now kept in place with stones from the neighboring wall that some one had put there that very spring. Helen sat there watching the little patches of sunlight on the grass, and thinking of the brave, handsome, manly form that once came up the path with vigorous, eager step, a question on his lips. She heard the gate swing on its rusty hinges. Somebody was coming. It was probably the caretaker. Why must the woman intrude upon her now? No, it was not the step of a woman. The boughs were too thick and low to reveal the path.

"Helen!" called a voice that she would have known in the depths of a mine or among the starry spaces. "Helen!"

She arose and stood trembling, her face like death, her lips parted, her heart almost stilled for an instant. He came nearer, stooping to push aside the hindering, overhanging branches,

then stood before her, tall, worn, and gray, but with the same love in his eyes. He took her in his hungry arms, and kissed her forehead, her closed lids, her cheeks and lips. She could not speak nor look. She hardly dared to breathe.

"Helen," he whispered, "Helen, look at me!"

"It is a spirit!" she murmured. "If I look, you will vanish."

"No, sweet, it is I, myself. God is merciful!"

She opened her eyes and gazed into his as if she were looking through the gates of death into the fields of paradise.

"All in white," he said, "just as I have so often pictured you, Helen, standing here with the sunlight dancing on your hair and gown."

"An old woman, Harry!" she replied, smiling half sadly.

"Immortals are not old at forty," he answered. "It is not a young lover who has come for you, my own! Love for us must be like wine of a vintage so long gone that the fruit of the vine has become priceless in its mellow sweetness, matchless in its color and sparkle, and with life to revive even the hopes that the years have slain. O, Helen, Helen, Helen!"

They sat for hours and talked. Harry had the strangest of all strange stories to tell, one that if found between book covers would have passed as exaggerated fiction. The ship he sailed in had been burned at sea, and a few of the passengers were picked up by a sailing vessel, bound for the far East. It had been beaten far from its course, and finally wrecked on a rocky shore in the South Pacific. Harry Reynolds had been preserved almost miraculously in the surf, and cast up at the feet of native savages, at whose hands he anticipated the most horrible fate. They proved, however, to be a kindly tribe, who ministered to his needs and shared their best with him. He discovered later that he was on a large island where no ship ever came. He accepted it as his mission field. He learned the speech of the inhabitants, and taught many of them his own. He taught them of God and of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. He won them from their idols. He would never forget to all eternity the day that the first soul was enabled to become a son of God. The whole tribe became Christianized. They had no other Bible than his lips, but he had

from a child committed to memory many portions of the Scriptures. Years passed by, and one day as he sat in the porch of the little house that he had built he descried a peculiar speck on the horizon. It was a ship. He knew that God could send for him when he saw fit to do so.

It was an exploring expedition that was coming. Men were looking for spice islands; but God was sending for his exiled servant. The ship drew near and lowered a boat, and that noon Harry Reynolds for the first time in many years looked into white faces and heard his mother tongue. The island was rich in gums and spices, and contained large flocks of rare and interesting birds. The officers of the ship and the commander of the expedition were profoundly moved by the missionary's story, and treated him with all possible courtesy. When they sailed, exultant over their splendid find, the Rev. Mr. Reynolds went with them. He had noble, capable Christian helpers with whom he could intrust his beloved work for a season, and, promising to return if permitted by God, he was carried to Liverpool, and thence was provided with funds to reach America. So many silent

years had elapsed that he knew not what might have become of Helen. He feared that she might be dead, or perhaps married. He reported at missionary headquarters, asked to have a younger man appointed to the field, with whom he would be willing to return for a year or two, and then with unspeakable, increasing agony of suspense he had hastened to Sunnyslope, arriving there late on a Saturday night. He inquired at the inn for the Wests, but the landlord was a very modern adjunct of the village. He went out and walked under the familiar elms, and the very air of the spring night was tremulous and scented with newness of life. He passed the West homestead. It was all in darkness. He bethought him of a kindly woman, a friend of his mother's who owned a pleasant little home not far down the street. He went to the gate. A group of young people were singing college songs in the parlor. He rang the front door bell. A boy opened it.

"Does Mrs. Greenleaf live here?" asked Mr. Reynolds.

A girl said politely, "No, sir. I never heard of a family by that name."

A middle-aged man stepped to the parlor door.

"Mrs. Greanleaf used to live here years ago," he said, "but she's been up in the Congregational buryin' ground these ten or a dozen years. I bought this place from she that was Sally Greenleaf when she moved out West with her husband."

"Are you Abner Trueman?" asked Harry, with a tear in his voice.

"That's what they've pretty much always called me," said the man, "but who be you?"

"Abner," said Harry, recognizing an old schoolmate at the academy, and taking a step forward, "don't say you don't know me."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mr. Trueman, "if you ain't old Dr. Reynolds's boy, Harry! Marier!" he called to his wife, who was clearing away the remains of a feast from the extension table in the dining room at the end of the hall, "come and see who we've got here!"

Mrs. Trueman came hurriedly forward, adjusting the strings of a white apron that appeared as she removed her gingham one. She hesitated while she scanned the stranger.

"Mercy sakes!" she exclaimed, holding out a plump, comfortable hand. "I guess you must have rose right from the dead, Harry Reynolds."

Harry could see now that she had been rosy little Maria Moore. She would know what his weary heart was burning to hear and yet dreaded to learn.

"I came in on the late train," he said. "I haven't been here in about fifteen years. I've put up at the inn, but I couldn't sleep to-night until I had walked along the old street and tried to find a familiar face."

"Walk right out here," said Mrs. Trueman, cordially. "The children have had a birthday spread to-night. Can't I give you a bite of something?"

"No, I thank you," said Harry. "I'm only hungry for news of our old friends and neighbors. I'll sit a moment."

"Well," said Abner, "the Methodist folks have got a new church, an' the Stanton homestead's been sold, and their big garden cut up into buildin' lots. We've got reservoy water in the village, an' there's gas works goin' up this summer. There's a post office buildin'. They took

it out of Hawkins' store five years ago. He was awful cut up over it."

"But, Abner," said his wife, "it's folks that he wants to hear about. Jest give me a chance now. Ain't you heard nothin' about nobody?" she asked of Harry.

He thought they must hear his heart pounding on his ribs.

"No," he said. "The proprietor of the inn seems to be rather new here."

"Well," said Mrs. Trueman, picking up the hem of her apron and plaiting it between her fingers, "I guess your nearest neighbors was the Wests."

Harry nodded.

"Eloise run off before you left, didn't she? Yes. Well, it 'most killed her par. He lingered along a spell, an' then he died, an' Helen—if there ever was an angel without wings that girl's the one—went to teachin' in the old academy. She taught an' taught fer years, an' then—"

Harry held his breath.

"Say, mar," said the oldest boy, rushing out into the dining room, "they're all a-goin." They

want to say good-bye to you. Floss Perrine says it's manners."

Mrs. Trueman said that she would be right along, and, rising, said to Harry:

"You'll excuse me a moment. I guess Abner can go on with my story."

"Well?" said Harry, turning to Mr. Trueman.

"Why, it was kind of sing'lar," said Abner, "that after all them years Helen got track of Eloise's only child, a girl, an' after Laurance Wilsey died Helen went down to York—last winter 'twas—to live with her niece."

"Is she there now?" questioned Harry.

"No, she's here. I see her myself to-day down to the post office. She's 'most as handsome as ever. She's kept a room or two at the old house to come to when she likes. Now, them Greenleafs that you was askin' about—"

But Harry had arisen.

"I'll see you again, Abner," he said, moving toward the door. "It's very late, you know, and I'm very tired. Say good-bye to your good lady, and many thanks for your kindness."

He went out into the darkness, but the night

was light about him. He leaned on the gate-post of his old home, and looked across at the roof that sheltered the desire of his eyes, and praised God silently.

All this he told to Helen that morning in the orchard, and some of it she wrote to Edyth the next day. She also said:

"Harry hopes to return to his people for a while to get a new missionary started in his work. The ship he came on to Liverpool will return soon after the holidays. Of course he wants me to go with him. I want to see you married to Winthrop before we sail. In regard to the matter of selling this property to you, I am willing to do so at any time. I wish I could give it to you, but it is almost all that I have of my own.

"Harry urges me to be married here quietly next week. Of course a man does not realize the amount of sewing there will be to do beforehand. Then, too, my darling girl, my marriage will mean the breaking up of our little home in the city, and I do not want to interfere so suddenly with your lovely work. Please write to me just how you feel about it all."

The second day brought the following letter from Edyth:

"Dearest of Aunties: Hallelujah! No other word can express it. Certainly you must be married next week. You can sew all the rest of your life, and if you were married to-day it wouldn't give you two any too much time together, after such a terrible separation. I saw Winthrop last night and read him a part of your letter, and he thinks just as I do, with the exception that he had the temerity to propose a double wedding! For this he was duly chastised. You will receive this on Wednesday morning. Please take the afternoon train down, and we will meet you at the station at nine o'clock that night. I am going to give myself the pleasure of providing your entire outfit—wedding-gown, veil, and all. We will go right to Madam Moray, who used to make my clothes, and she will rush the whole trousseau through within a week. Then we'll all go to Sunnyslope for the ceremony. Do you ask what is going to become of me? I think it is better for me to rent your dear old home for the summer. You would feel sorry to part with

it even to me, and you will do better to rent it furnished than you would to sell it and invest the money. But more of this when you come.

"My love to my new uncle. Winthrop and I both commend his enterprise.

"Ever your loving

"EDYTH."

Mr. Reynolds was wanted at the Mission Rooms on Thursday, so he accompanied Miss West to New York at the time Edyth had appointed, and impressed the young people, who were at the station to meet Helen, with his distinguished appearance and courtly manners.

"I thank you both," he said, "for espousing my cause. 'The eternal feminine' in Helen would have put off the happy day indefinitely. I did not see why she could not be married in the white gown she had on last Sunday morning."

"Edyth," whispered Helen to her niece, "it was a morning wrapper!"

"But you looked like an angel in it," said Edyth, giving her arm a hearty squeeze.

There were a few hurried but happy days in

the city, followed by a couple of still more busy ones in the Sunnyslope home, and the old-fashioned parlor of the brown house was turned into a bower of roses in honor of Helen's bridal. There was no one present but the resident minister and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Dayton, Edyth and Mr. Leigh. The three ministers divided the ceremony among them. Helen was gloriously beautiful in her rich gown of cream-white satin and rare lace, and Harry stood at her side like a prince whose love had prevailed over time and space. It was a sacred hour, never to be forgotten by the few who were privileged to share in it, when those two whose lips had quaffed the cup of disappointment and pain to the very dregs now stood hand in hand, crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercy. They had chosen to take their wedding trip in the shape of a carriage journey across the picturesque country, and they went on their way in all the glory of the June afternoon.

Mr. Leigh and the Daytons left on the last train for the city, and Edyth, blessedly filled with praise to God, went to rest in the room that had once belonged to Eloise, her girl-mother.

The summer flew swiftly on golden wings. Edyth had all of her girls, two or three at a time, and once in a while a worn and discouraged mother and a sick child, to spend a couple of weeks among the restful hills. Mr. Reynolds was in demand as a missionary speaker at summer assemblies, where multitudes of people were stirred by his story to a deeper love for those who sit in darkness. Helen always accompanied him on these journeys, so Edyth saw but little of her until the month of October brought them back to stay with Edyth in Sunnyslope until the time for her marriage to Winthrop Leigh.

He had been back and forth occasionally during the summer, stopping at the inn, and sometimes preaching in the pulpit of a local church. Those who heard him predicted a bright future, but none would have ventured to assert that a time would come when his church in the slums would have a reputation from sea to sea, and his pulpit would make the selfish rich tremble for their souls' salvation. Yet such was his destiny.

He always brought to Edyth satisfactory reports of the progress of the buildings.

"They make an elegant and impressive appearance," he said. "The organ in the chapel is a magnificent instrument, and I hope you will run down soon and see the windows. They are rich enough for a fine uptown church."

"Well, the poor people who will attend there will need grand music and beautiful windows a great deal more than those who usually have them. I do not think they will be frightened away by such things, so long as we have no formidable pews and rich carpets."

"O, Edyth," said he one evening, when they had been talking a long time about their work, "what would I give if my dear mother could know about this! She had a burning love for souls, an absorbing enthusiasm for the kingdom of Christ, and she often mourned that she could do so little. I have always been glad that her name was 'Mary.' "

"Her spirit set your own on fire, Winthrop. If she had been a woman of the world, I doubt if I had ever met you in a downtown mission."

Mr. Leigh had taken the proper steps to secure the sanction of the authorities of his Church to his work in the field where Provi-

dence had evidently directed him. By the first of December the splendid structures were completed, and the chapel was publicly dedicated to the service of God. It was on the afternoon of the day previous that Edyth stood with Winthrop on the chapel steps and ordered the heavy cloth that concealed the arch of the entrance to be removed. The winter sunshine streamed on the inscription, and Winthrop Leigh with misty eyes and swelling heart read what love had caused to be traced there: "The Mary Leigh Memorial Chapel."

A few days later Edyth went to call on Mrs. Walthope, to invite her to her wedding. Edyth had never allowed herself to suspect Eleanor's treachery, but had put the thought far from her. She inquired for her of Mrs. Walthope.

"Eleanor is lost to me, Miss Wilsey. Shortly after you met her here she went abroad with a pleasure party for a Mediterranean cruise. During the voyage a young physician from Baltimore became engaged to a lady in the party, and a dinner was given on board in honor of the event. Eleanor jumped overboard that night, but, the steamer being at anchor and the

night very bright, was rescued and resuscitated. She had been moody for some days before, and had confided to a lady of the party that something weighed on her mind and she did not know a happy moment. At Genoa she left the party, and went to London, where she is studying for the stage."

Edyth found that the Dudleys were in California for the winter, so her invitations were limited to the Campbells and the Daytons. Mr. Leigh had a college chum whom he desired to have present, and Edyth had asked all of her girls.

It was an afternoon wedding, and through the high rose window on the west the sunlight slanted in wide rays of crimson and purple. The chancel was all abloom with white roses and carnations, and graceful, stately palms lent their own peculiar charm to the scene. The outer doors of the chapel were closed, the few guests grouped quietly about the altar, and only the soft, mellow strains of the great organ broke the sacred hush that filled the lofty room. Helen Reynolds, robed by Edyth's request in her regal white wedding

gown, and radiant with happiness, stood a little nearer than the others to the bride's place. The Rev. Harry Reynolds and the Rev. Charles Dayton waited within the altar. Edyth came through an inner passage from her new rooms in the next building. She leaned on the arm of her lover, and was without attendants. She hardly seemed of the earth, earthy, so pure, so evanescent she appeared in her filmy veil and gleaming white garments. As for Winthrop Leigh, he walked on hallowed ground, his soul filled with awe of this shining being whom God had sent to him with love's golden chalice in her hands.

We will leave them there, kneeling at the altar in the sunshine, the light of God upon their path and in their hearts; and sweeter than the organ music floating through the house of prayer is that divine summons sounding in the ears of each:

"He died for all; that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again."

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